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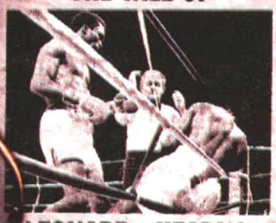


LEONARD - HEARNS
MARCH 5

THE TALE OF

HOLMES - COONEY
MARCH 12

THE TALE OF

PRYOR - ARGUELLO
MARCH 19

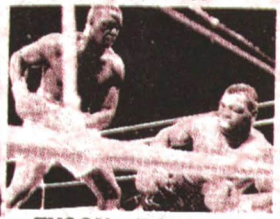
THE TALE OF

HAGLER - HEARNS
MARCH 26

THE TALE OF

HAGLER - LEONARD
APRIL 2

THE TALE OF



TYSON - DOUGLAS
APRIL 9

THE TALE OF

CHAVEZ - TAYLOR
APRIL 16

THE TALE OF

HOLYFIELD - BOWE
APRIL 23

THE TALE OF

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APRIL 30

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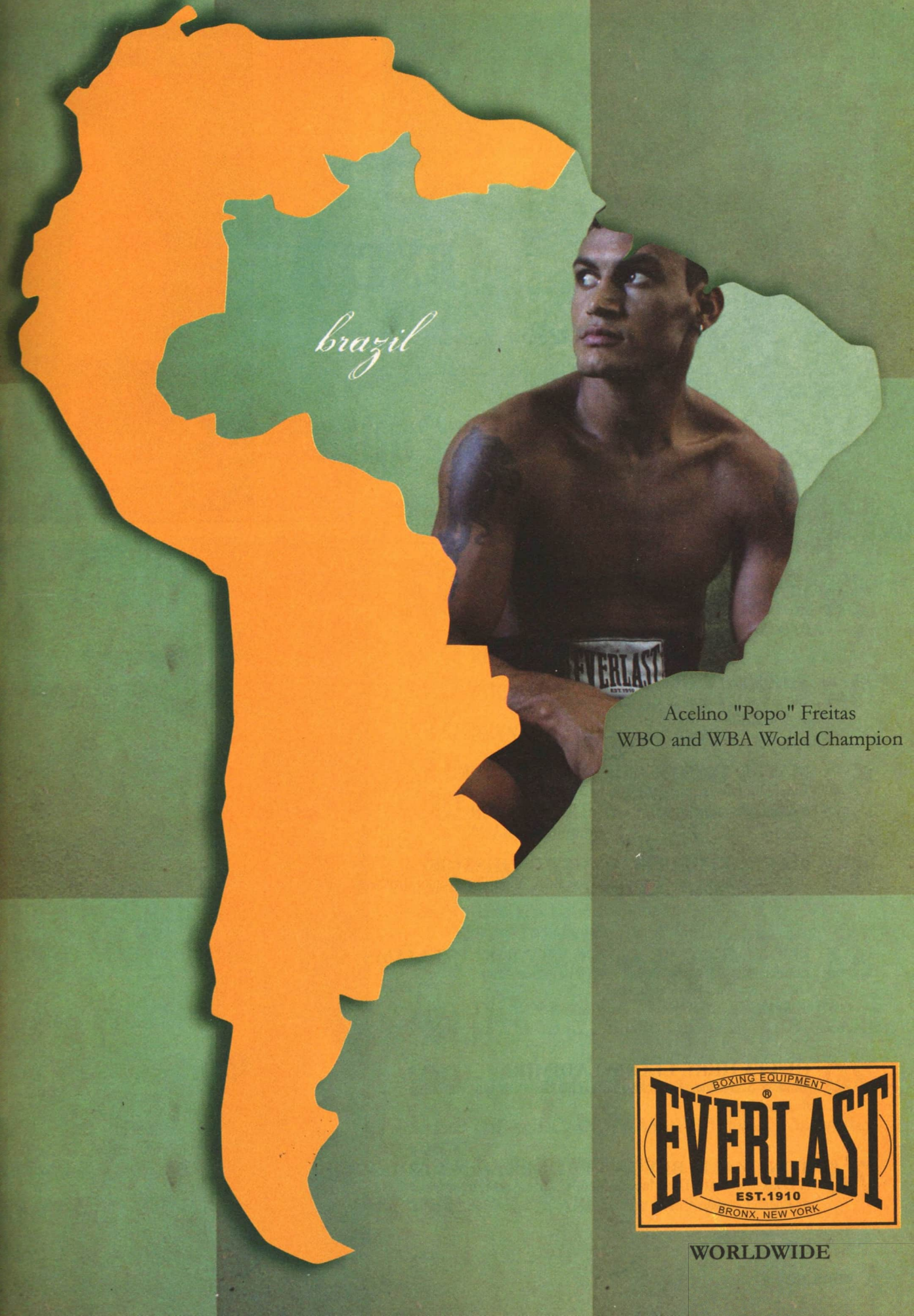

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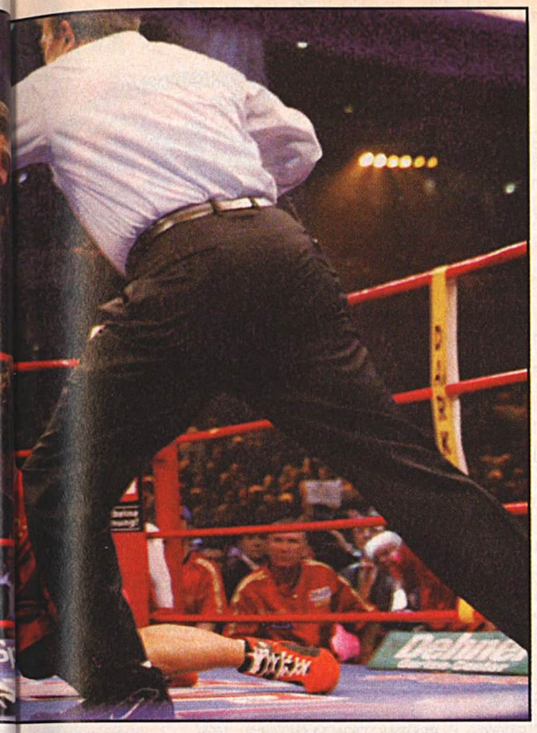
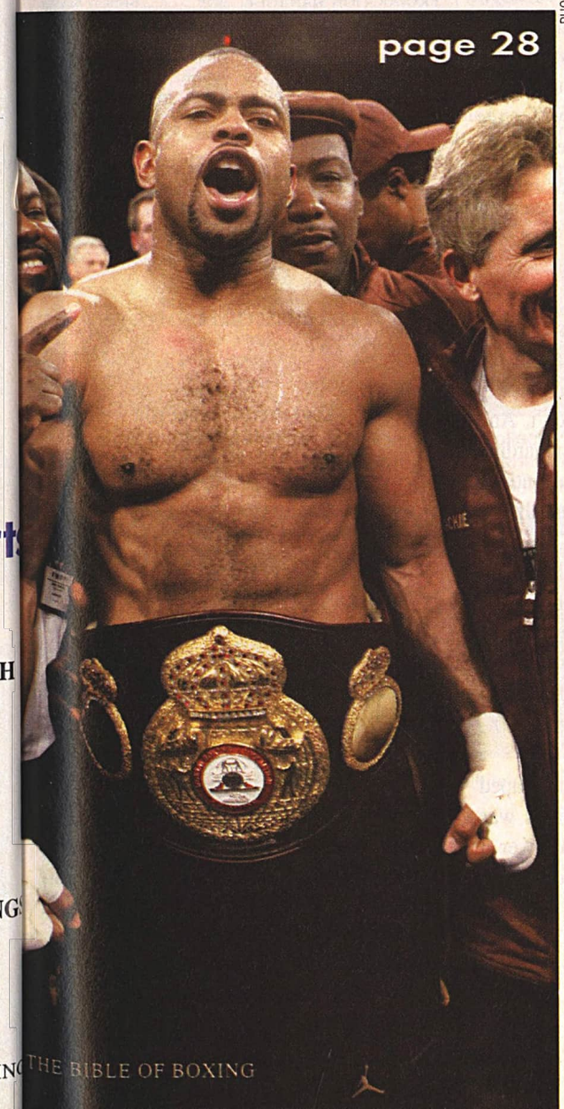
PHOTO BY HOLLY STEIN/HBO





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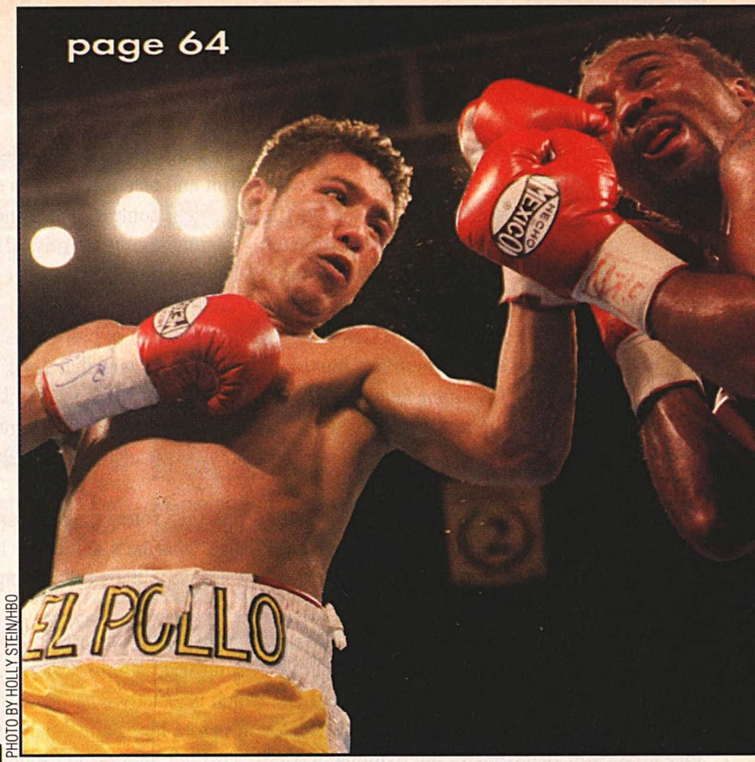

PHOTO BY HOLLY STEIN/HBO

Cover: *Roy Jones*
by Jed Jacobsohn/Getty Images

Cover Design: *Joe Kalman*

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RINGSIDE

In the immediate aftermath of the Roy Jones' one-sided victory over John Ruiz, most of the print and electronic media struggled mightily to put the bout in historical context. They knew Jones had accomplished something unusual, but often missed the mark when attempting to compare his conquest of Ruiz to the accomplishments of great fighters from the past.

The result was frequently a mishmash of half-truths and misinformation, the most blatant of which was that Jones was the first light heavyweight champion since Michael Spinks to win the heavyweight title. That, of course, was totally bogus simply because Ruiz was *not* the heavyweight champion. That distinction belongs solely to Lennox Lewis.

The truth of the matter was that Jones really doesn't need any artificial gilding to enhance what he's achieved. It was an excellent performance by a remarkable fighter, but not quite the earthshaking historical event that many would have you believe.

Even though Spinks was the only light heavyweight champion to win the genuine heavyweight title, plenty of others—Tommy Loughran, Archie Moore, Harold Johnson—have beaten heavyweight contenders, which is exactly what Ruiz was going into the Jones fight. Therefore, like those who went before him, Jones' name will now appear twice in THE RING's "International Ratings," as both light heavyweight champion and as a heavyweight contender. Should he decide sometime in the future to campaign exclusively in one division or another, we will make the appropriate adjustment.

As is made abundantly clear by this issue's cover story ("Now What, Roy?", *page 28*), THE RING feels that Jones' virtuoso performance against Ruiz qualifies him to fight any heavyweight in the world, including Lewis.

Jones' triumph over Ruiz also reinforced my long-held opinion that size, in and of itself, is greatly overrated and seldom proves the difference at the top level. Ruiz was three inches taller than Jones and weighed 33 pounds more, but his physical advantages were of no help whatsoever.

Jones triumphed over Ruiz for one reason and one reason only: He's a vastly superior fighter. Size had absolutely nothing to do with it, unless you're talking about the size of a fighter's talent, and in that category Roy is as big as any fighter on the planet.

Congratulations, Roy, you did something a lot of folks thought you couldn't. And while I wouldn't blame you for sticking to your original one-and-done policy regarding heavyweight competition, I think I speak for most fans in saying that I hope you continue your heavyweight adventure. Who knows? You just might end up surprising yourself.

***

Just because it was an off-TV fight on a charity card held in Mexico, I'm not about to let the WBC off the hook for sanctioning a title bout between Erik Morales, the organization's featherweight beltholder, and *Eddie Croft*. This wasn't just shoddy matchmaking; it was criminal. Croft hadn't fought in three years and had lost his last three bouts, but the WBC thought it was okay for him to challenge one of the finest fighters in the world. This from an organization that prides itself on advancing the cause of ring safety! What a bunch of hypocrites.

Thankfully, the 33-year-old Croft was dispatched in the third round and escaped serious injury. Nevertheless, giving such an obscene mismatch its blessings was another nail in the WBC coffin. As far as I'm concerned, it's past time to lower it into the grave and start shoveling dirt on top. The corpse has been stinking for far too long now.

Nigel Collins
Editor-in-Chief

Volume 82, No. 7 July 2003

The RING

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London Publishing Co.
P.O. Box 2029, Dept. 9
Marion, OH 43306-8121
(815) 734-1212

The Ring (ISSN: 0035-5410), Vol. 82, No. 7 (Extra, July 2003), is published monthly, with an additional issues in August and December, by London Publishing Co., 7002 W. Butler Pike, Ambler, PA 19002. Periodicals postage paid at Ambler, PA 19002 and additional post offices. Postmaster: Send change of address notices to: The Ring, P.O. Box 2029, Dept. 9, Marion, OH 43306-8121. Single copy price $5.95 ($8.95 in Canada, £3.95 in U.K.). Subscription price $59.64 in the U.S., $69.24 in Canada and remaining countries. Not responsible for the loss or non-return of unsolicited articles or photographs, which will not be returned unless accompanied by a self-addressed envelope bearing the proper amount of postage.

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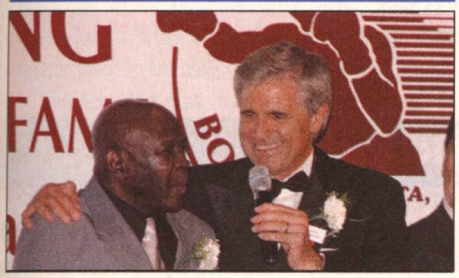

Reunion . . . Emile Griffith and Nino Benvenuti recall three memorable championship fights.

FIST CASTING

Everlasting . . . Fist cast by Jeff Fenech.

PARADE OF CHAMPIONS

Marvelous . . . Marvin Hagler waves to fans.

Hooray . . . Earnie Shavers shows off the stars and stripes.

CELEBRITY BOXING NIGHT

HECTOR CAMACHO

Fight Night . . . Popular boxers featured in action-packed bouts at Turning Stone Casino Resort.

MUSEUM GROUNDS

Star-Studded . . . Ruben Olivares signs a poster while Bert Sugar and Christy Martin square off for the fans.

5K RACE, FUN RUN

Finish Line . . . "Irish" Micky Ward in stride.

Go . . . Ken Norton officially starts race of celebrity boxers and runners.

INDUCTION CEREMONY

A Moment in Time . . . Pipino Cuevas, Jeff Fenech and Reg Gutteridge proudly display their Hall of Fame rings.

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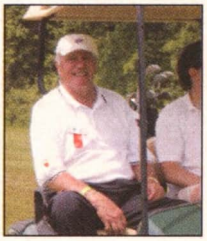

Chip . . . Gerry Cooney (l) chips onto 18th green while Sir Henry Cooper (r) is enroute to next tee.

VIP COCKTAIL RECEPTION

Stars . . . Boxers and fans enjoy VIP reception while Angelo Dundee receives red carpet welcome.

WORKOUT SESSIONS

Christy Martin laces up her gloves and Bernard Hopkins hits the speed bag.

RINGSIDE TALKS

Reminiscing. . . Alexis Arguello (L) reunites with Ruben Olivares (R).

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ROUND ONE

TRIPLE TRIP-UP

In a month in which the usual suspects among active fighters all managed to keep their names off th police blotters, a trio of retired former champions (okay, technically two ex-champions and one forme titleholder) brought bad press to themselves and to the sport of boxing by getting into trouble with th law. Riddick Bowe, Bobby Czyz, and Pernell Whitaker were all either arrested or sentenced to jail tim in early-March, and in all three cases, the ex-fighters have been struggling to keep off the police rada since retiring from boxing within the past few years.

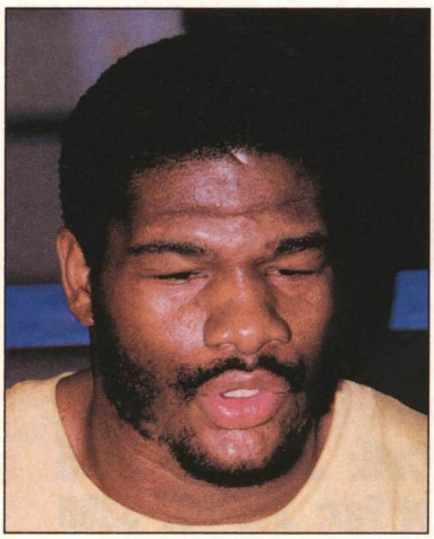
Former light heavyweight and cruiserweight beltholder Czyz' problems are the most surprisin because his previous legal concerns had been kept quiet, and because he had a solid, secure career goin as the primary color analyst for Showtime boxing. The 41-year-old Czyz, who's been retired sinc 1998, was pulled over and charged with drunken driving in Readington, New Jersey, in early-February It was later discovered that Czyz had three prior DWI convictions, in '98, '99, and '00, and with thos charges now brought to light, he was sentenced in early-March to 10 days in jail (to be served on week ends). Additional jail time for the latest DWI charge was to be determined at a March 27 hearing.

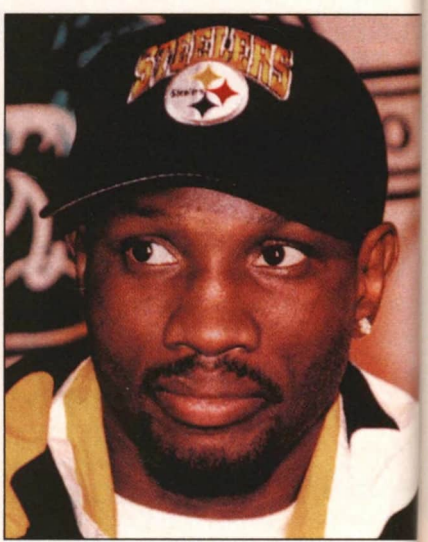
Former undisputed lightweight champion Whitaker's legal issues are also DWI-related. In mid February, Whitaker, who was on probation due to a cocaine possession conviction, was charged wit drunken driving in his native Virginia. In March, "Sweet Pea" was sentenced to 27 months in prison fo violating his probation. The 39-year-old Whitaker, who retired from boxing in April '01 after an unex pected injury TKO defeat, was to be transferred from prison to Indian Creek Therapeutic Center i Chesapeake, Virginia, where he would serve his sentence while receiving rehab treatment.

As for former heavyweight king Bowe, he was arrested in early-March for allegedly assaulting hi second wife, Terri, just a few days before he was scheduled to begin an 18-month prison sentence fo kidnapping and stabbing his first wife, Judy. Bowe, 35, has had almost perpetual legal problems sinc retiring from boxing in '96, and this latest one has him facing an April court date. If there's one positiv thing to come out of this, it's that a Bowe ring return—which was being considered in recent months— now seems that much more unlikely to ever happen.

—Eric Raski

Bowe, Czyz, and Whitaker were all jailbound in March





KID GAVILAN, 1926-2003

When he turned pro at 17 in his native Cuba, Gerardo Gonzalez took his ring name from his manager's grocery store, called "El Gavilan." Eight years later, Kid Gavilan was a franchise unto himself in the welterweight division, beginning a championship reign that, while it lasted only three years (1951-'54), made the busy, flashy "Hawk" one of the best-known and most popular figures back in the Paleolithic Era of TV boxing.

But Gavilan was no dinosaur. Blessed with terrific stamina and natural fighting ability, "The Keed" had an equally natural flare for showmanship that grabbed audiences and made him right at home in the eerie cathode spotlight. In 1953, fighting tough Ramon Fuentes in the first Pabst Blue Ribbon fight broadcast out of the Arena in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, Gavilan floored his man in the seventh round after first making sure to maneuver Fuentes into optimum position for the fixed bank of TV cameras to record it.

And of course there were his trademark "bolo" punch, the roundhouse right that ostensibly aped the motion young Gerardo used in the sugar cane fields of his childhood; and the samba steps he incorporated into his footwork between the ropes. Pretty tame stuff by today's standards; they were real attention-getters in the '50s.

Gavilan came up short in a crackling 1949 welterweight title fight with a peak Sugar Ray Robinson, but picked off the 147-pound belt left behind by Robinson when Sugar Ray moved up to middleweight, beating Johnny Bratton two years later. Earlier, there was a thrilling three-fight series (of which Gavilan won two) with former lightweight champion Ike Williams, one of only two men (Carmen Basilio was the other) to ever knock Gavilan off his feet in 143 professional bouts.

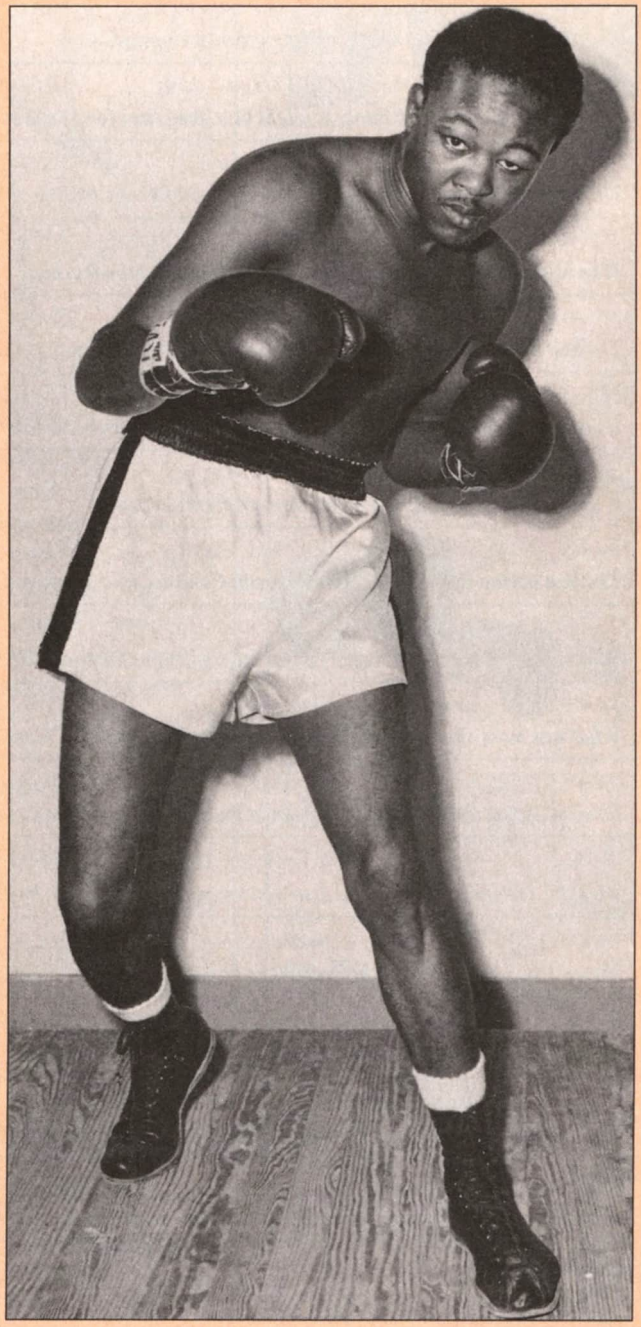
The split decision Gavilan got over Billy Graham in his first title defense on August 29, 1951, is usually invoked as Exhibit A by anyone making a case that boxing was corrupt in the days of the International Boxing Club. But Nat Fleischer, editor of THE RING, who himself thought Graham won the close fight, pointed out that four of the six magazine staffers on site thought the decision for the champion was the correct one. So did James P. Dawson of the *New York Times*, and the unassailable Dan Parker. In any case, Gavilan convincingly outpointed Graham down the road, and in between fending off other welterweight challengers Bobby Dykes, Chuck Davey, Gil Turner (probably Gavilan's most impressive championship performance), Basilio, and Bratton again, Gavilan also regularly appeared in non-title bouts against ranked welters and middleweights. In 1953, he fought 10 times, three of them title defenses.

Bobo Olson convincingly outpointed him in Gavilan's 1954 go at the 160-pound belt. As his career wore on, Gavilan tended to fight only as hard as he needed to. The controversial loss of his title on points to Johnny Saxton on October 20, 1954, had a distraught Gavilan crying fix this time and talking retirement; but he hung on until 1958, finishing 107-30-6 (28).

After Castro confiscated all his property in Cuba, the Kid, whose post-boxing health was never robust, came to the U.S. for good in the 1960s and was deservedly held in awe by fans who weren't even around when he rhumba'd across the boxing stage. He went into the International Boxing Hall of Fame in 1990, in the same class as Robinson.

It's a testament to Gavilan's evergreen popularity that his death by heart attack on February 13, at age 77, even warranted mention by mainstream media outlets that nowadays would sooner cover curling than boxing. The Gavilan mystique survives him, although most current imitators of the boxer named after a grocery store come across as strictly K-Mart.

—Pete Ehrmann



Ring legend Gavilan dies at 77

TV FIGHTS OF THE MONTH

DATE	WINNER/LOSER	NETWORK	DIVISION	SIGNIFICANCE	MATCHUP	RESULT
2-13-03	Kelson Pinto KO 2 Richard Savage	HBO L	jw	C	D-	B
Sure Pinto can punch, but we'd be more impressed if Savage weren't older than Methuselah						
2-13-03	Juan Lazcano Tech. Win 9 Danny Rios	HBO L	l	B+	D	C+
An idea whose time has come: Lazcano against Stevie Johnston in a title eliminator						
2-14-03	Laila Ali KO 4 Mary Ann Almager	ESPN2	sm	B-	D+	B-
We'd say we would like Ali to fight someone already, but really, who is there?						
2-14-03	Kermit Cintron KO 6 Frankie Sanchez	Telef	w	C+	C+	C+
Good win for Cintron; last time out, Sanchez went the distance with Panchito Bojado						
2-15-03	Juan Valenzuela W 10 Ricardo Williams	HBO	w	B-	B	A-
Anyone else notice Lou DiBella turning green at ringside?						
2-15-03	**Rafael Marquez KO 8 Tim Austin**	**HBO**	**IBF b**	**A+**	**A**	**B**
So now Don King finally thinks it might be a good time for Austin to move up in weight; what a visionary						
2-21-03	Julio Garcia W 10 Irving Garcia	ESPN2	jm	C	A	B+
The more skilled guy doesn't always win; Julio took this with desire and an iron chin						
2-21-03	**Wayne Braithwaite KO 4 Ravea Springs**	**ESPN2**	**WBC c**	**A-**	**C+**	**C+**
Who else thinks James Toney has a bright future in broadcasting?						
2-22-03	Mike Tyson KO 1 Cliff Etienne	Show	h	A	C+	B
The best part of Tyson these days isn't the fighting; it's the postfight interviews						
2-28-03	Friday Ahunanaya D 10 Terrance Lewis	ESPN2	h	C-	B-	F
If you stayed awake for all of this, get to a doctor; you have a disorder						
3-1-03	Vonda Ward W 4 Martha Salazar	PPV	h	C-	C+	B
Ward proof that all tall, thin blonds are not created equal						
3-1-03	**Winky Wright W 12 J.C. Candelo**	**PPV**	**IBF jm**	**A**	**B-**	**B**
The best boring fight you'll ever see; credit Candelo, who stood with Wright all the way						
3-1-03	Fres Oquendo KO 10 Maurice Harris	PPV	h	B	B	C+
How many times are we going to fall for guys telling us how good Harris is?						
3-1-03	**Roy Jones W 12 John Ruiz**	**PPV**	**WBA h**	**A+**	**C+**	**B-**
What was more shocking: how easy it was for Jones, or Norm Stone's disturbingly white, pimpled, shaven head?						
3-6-03	Juan Gomez Trinidad KO 7 Efren Hinojosa	HBO L	l	B-	A-	B
So what do you think they all talk about at the Trinidad family cookouts?						
3-6-03	Henry Bruseles W 12 Hicklet Lau	HBO L	jw	C+	C+	A-
We can't remember the last time Lau won an important fight, but he always puts on a good show						
3-7-03	Samuel Peter KO 4 Dale Crowe	ESPN2	h	C+	B	B-
Haven't we seen Peter fight before? When he was Courage Tshabalala?						
3-7-03	George Jones W 12 Rodney Moore	ESPN2	lh	B-	B-	D-
See, it's not always the heavyweights that put us to sleep						
3-8-03	Corrie Sanders KO 2 Wladimir Klitschko	HBO	h	A	C	B+
That swooshing sound you hear is Jameel McCline hurling himself off a building						

Category Explanation: "Significance"—The importance of the bout to the division and the fighters' futures; "Matchup"—The quality of the fighters and the prefight determination of how their styles will mesh; "Result"—How the bout turned out, from the viewer's perspective.

(World/Alphabet title fights in **bold** type)

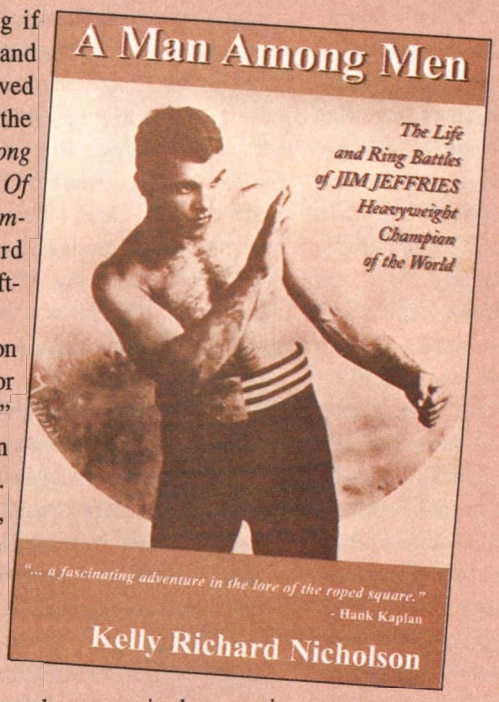
Division key: h—heavyweight; c—cruiserweight; lh—light heavyweight; sm—super middleweight; m—middleweight; jm—junior middleweight; w—welterweight; jw—junior welterweight; l—lightweight; jl—junior lightweight; f—featherweight; jf—junior featherweight; b—bantamweight; jb—junior bantamweight; fl—flyweight; jfl—junior flyweight; s—strawweight

Network key: PPV—Pay-Per-View; Show—Showtime; FOXSN—Fox SportsNet; Uni—Univision; Telef—Telefutura; Telem—Telemundo; HBO L—HBO Latino

THE BOXING BOOKSHELF

For a laconic old grouch who once said he'd just as soon flatten gawkers as suffer their attentions, James J. Jeffries was anything but averse to ladling out his life story by the barrel full. The 1899-1904 heavyweight champion published at least two serialized newspaper autobiographies, another in the *Saturday Evening Post*, and also put out one between hard covers.

They all make for entertaining if occasionally implausible fare, and since most of its content is derived from one or the other of them, the same may be said of *A Man Among Men: The Life And Ring Battles Of Jim Jeffries, Heavyweight Champion Of The World* (Homeward Bound Publishing, 189 pages, softcover, $29.95).



Author Kelly Richard Nicholson offers little fresh perspective on nor insight into "The Boilermaker," and approaches his subject as an unabashed Jeffries idolator. There's nothing wrong with that, and certainly compared to some who occupied his throne afterward, there is much to admire in Big Jeff. But perhaps a little more skepticism, even of the playful, raised-eyebrow variety, ought to have been exercised concerning some of the more robust claims on Jeffries' resume. Maybe the big guy really did cure himself of a deadly pneumonia by drinking a case of whiskey, and there is no way to prove it didn't happen; but that's the kind of thing that ought to be dealt with somewhat gingerly rather than swallowed whole. Likewise, accounts of Jeff's hunting exploits repeated here would make Daniel Boone blush. At one point Jeffries and Bob Fitzsimmons come off like Grizzly Adams and Mad Jack in their mutual love of all critters.

Big Jeff may have been, as Nicholson avers, "incapable of duplicity himself," but he surely wasn't above telling whatever version of the truth made him stand a little taller and gilded his legend just a little more. As for his invincibility in the ring until Jack Johnson sank his rusted hulk, there were major critics of Jeffries the fighting man (e.g., the savvy Sidney McNeill Sutherland) whose viewpoint would've provided nice balance.

For all that, and also its stilted prose ("At that moment the two men looked out upon this gathering, upon fellowship, old and young, of every stripe, amidst sunlight and laughter. There they beheld what was more important than all the fame and accolades in the world, in one of those moments when life offers a glimpse of Home along the way.") and some narrative gaps (manager William Brady all of a sudden appears in the picture when Jeff is preparing to fight Fitz for the title, but we don't find out how he got there until much later), it's fun to see how it was when the heavyweight champion of the world was as mythic and awesome a figure as the Sasquatch or Popeye (post-spinach). The rare photos are also a treat.

The book may be ordered from Outsource Solutions Group, Inc., 3403 South 1400 West, Bldg. B, Salt Lake City, UT 84119; toll-free telephone: 1-888-335-5750; email: Books@getoutsourced.com.

—Pete Ehrmann

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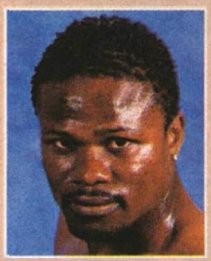
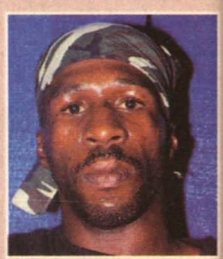


Forrest: Wins award before losing title

The Boxing Writers Association of America announced its 2002 award winners recently, with **Vernon Forrest** taking top honors by capturing the Edward J. Neil Trophy for Fighter of the Year. Needless to say, voting was unaffected by events that transpired in early-'03. Other winners: **Buddy McGirt** won the Futch-Condon Award for Trainer of the Year; **Klaus-Peter Kohl** and **Norman Stone** shared the Al Buck Award for Manager of the Year; **Steve Springer** of the *Los Angeles Times* won the Nat Fleischer Award for excellence in boxing journalism; Showtime's **Steve Farhood** won the Sam Taub Award for excellence in broadcast journalism; ex-fighter **Gerry Cooney**, the founder of the fighters' aid organization F.I.S.T., won the Marvin Kohn Good Guy Award; historian **Hank Kaplan** won the James J. Walker Award for long and meritorious service to boxing; and **Arturo Gatti** and **Micky Ward** received Harry Markson awards for their participation in the Fight of the Year—awards that are not bestowed every year … WBA super flyweight titleholder **Alexander Munoz** saw a leisurely Sunday jog in his native Venezuela turn into a violent disaster in mid-February. Munoz was assaulted by three armed men while doing his roadwork and was shot in the left knee as he tried to fight off his attackers. He had surgery to repair muscle damage (no bone was struck) and was expected to make a quick and full recovery, but it was unclear as of press time whether a scheduled May 3 title defense would go ahead … Inactive former featherweight titlist **Freddie Norwood** was arrested in early-February on charges of biting his girlfriend in the cheek and ear and sexually assaulting her following an argument. Norwood pleaded innocent … Two-division former titlist **Vinny Paz** was arrested in mid-February, accused of passing bad checks. He was apprehended at a Connecticut casino when authorites acted on a warrant issued in Las Vegas for allegedly writing approximately $65,000 worth of bad checks at casinos there three years ago … The result of a fight reported in the June 2003 RING was reversed in late-February, when the California State Athletic Commission changed a seventh-round knockout win for **Silverio Ortiz** over **Jorge Paez** to a technical decision win for Paez. After reviewing the tape of the bout, the commission felt that Paez had been kayoed by an unintentional foul while the referee was separating the fighters, meaning the fight should have gone to the scorecards, which favored Paez by split decision … After suffering a six-round decision loss to **Dewey Welliver** in late-February, 42-year-old **Livingstone Bramble**, loser of five straight and 12 of his last 15, announced his retirement. Bramble, 41-24-3 (25), held the WBA lightweight title from 1984-'86, and is best known for his two wins over **Ray "Boom Boom" Mancini** … Indonesian junior flyweight **Johannes "Bones" Fransiscus** died in early-February, three days after falling into a coma immediately following a seventh-round stoppage loss to **Slamet Nizar**. Fransiscus, just 19, had a career record of 8-1 (6). This was the first boxing death in Indonesia since a string of five deaths in 2000 and '01 … Italian middleweight **Antonio Perugino** appears on his way to a full recovery after suffering injuries in a mid-February fight. After winning a controversial six-round decision over **Orlando Javier Acuna**, Perugino, rated fourth by THE RING at the time, had brain surgery and slipped into a coma. It now looks as though Perugino will suffer no brain damage, but his boxing career is over … Former middleweight, light heavyweight, and heavyweight contender **Harry "Kid" Matthews** died of heart failure in late-February at the age of 80. Matthews, best remembered for a 1952 second-round knockout loss to **Rocky Marciano** in a heavyweight title eliminator, compiled an excellent 88-7-7 (61) record over a career that spanned from 1937-'56.



Bramble: Former lightweight king retires

THE PUNCHLINES

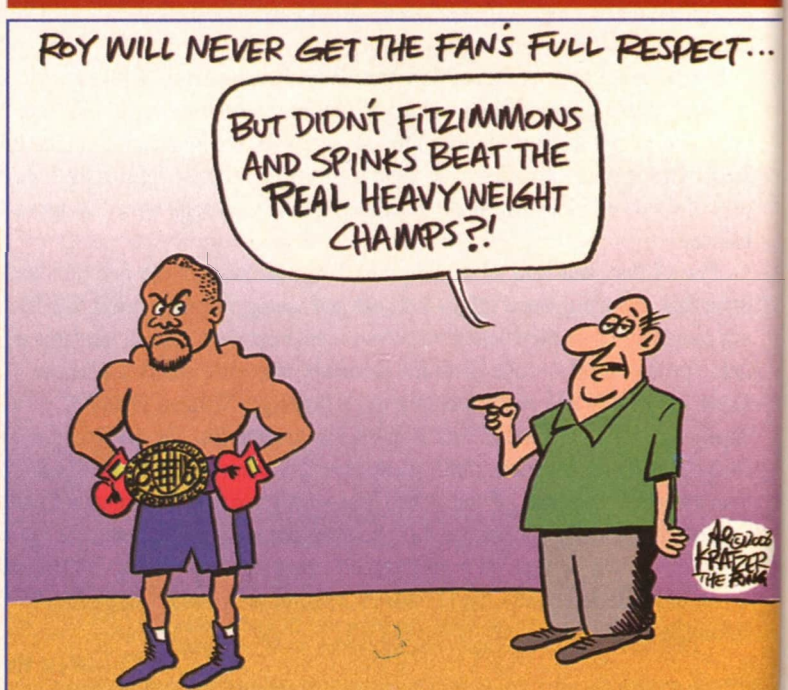
"Let's get ready to ramble!"

—Late night talk show host Jimmy Kimmel, introducing his co-host for the evening, Don King

"This night, the referee is going to be the most important man in the ring, other than the fighters."

—HBO analyst George Foreman, early in the first round of the Roy Jones-John Ruiz fight

AL KRATZER'S VIEW



The RING
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RATINGS ANALYSIS

POUND-FOR-POUND

1. ROY JONES
   Heavyweight/Light Heavyweight
2. BERNARD HOPKINS
   Middleweight
3. MARCO ANTONIO BARRERA
   Featherweight
4. OSCAR DE LA HOYA
   Junior Middleweight
5. KOSTYA TSZYU
   Junior Welterweight
6. ERIK MORALES
   Featherweight
7. FLOYD MAYWEATHER
   Lightweight
8. RICARDO MAYORGA
   Welterweight
9. LENNOX LEWIS
   Heavyweight
10. VERNON FORREST
    Welterweight

(For period ended March 11, 2003)

HEAVYWEIGHTS: Massive shake-up is prompted by Roy Jones' decision over John Ruiz and Corrie Sanders' upset kayo of Wladimir Klitschko. Light heavyweight champion Jones will now be ranked in both the 175-pound class and the heavyweight division, where he comes aboard at number four. Ruiz (fifth last issue) drops to ninth. Previously unranked Sanders is now number three, while Wladimir Klitschko (first last issue) plummets to eighth. Chris Byrd (second last issue) and David Tua (third last issue) move up to first and second, respectively. Mike Tyson advances from ninth to seventh following his blowout of Cliff Etienne. The realignment causes Evander Holyfield (fourth last issue) to drop to fifth, and Vitali Klitschko (seventh last issue) to dip to 10th. Kirk Johnson (eighth last issue) and Jameel McCline (formerly 10th) exit to make room for Sanders and Jones.

CRUISERWEIGHTS: Ezra Sellers (eighth last issue) changes places with O'Neil Bell (seventh last issue) on the strength of his second-round kayo of Jason Robinson. Alexandre Gurov (10th last issue) is gone following kayo loss to Jean-Marc Mormeck (currently number two). Sebastian Rothman replaces Gurov at number 10.

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS: Previously unranked Mehdi Sahnoune replaces Bruno Girard at number five due to his kayo win over the Frenchman. Girard falls to seventh. Stipe Drews (10th last issue) is bumped out to make room for Sahnoune. Lou Del Valle (seventh last issue), George Jones (eighth last issue), and Clinton Woods (ninth last issue) all drop one position in the reshuffling.

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS: No changes.

MIDDLEWEIGHTS: No changes.

JUNIOR MIDDLEWEIGHTS: Santiago Samaniego (10th last issue) departs after being stopped by unbeaten Alex Garcia, who is aboard at number eight. Garcia's arrival also pushes down Verno Phillips (eighth last issue) and Alex Bunema (ninth last issue) one spot each.

WELTERWEIGHTS: No changes.

JUNIOR WELTERWEIGHTS: No changes.

LIGHTWEIGHTS: Raul Balbi (eighth last issue) exits following kayo loss to journeyman Jose Rosa Gomez at welterweight. This allows Alejandro Gonzalez (ninth last issue) to advance to eighth and Julien Lorcy (10th last issue) to move into ninth. Juan Gomez Trinidad debuts at number 10 thanks to kayo of Efren Hinojosa.

JUNIOR LIGHTWEIGHTS: No changes.

FEATHERWEIGHTS: No changes.

JUNIOR FEATHERWEIGHTS: No changes.

BANTAMWEIGHTS: Rafael Marquez (fourth last issue) replaces Tim Austin in the number-one spot following his kayo of "The Cincinnati Kid," while Austin slides to third. Marquez' advancement pushes down Johnny Bredahl from third to fourth. Genaro Garcia replaces Ricardo Vargas at number 10 on the strength of decision over Mauricio Martinez.

JUNIOR BANTAMWEIGHTS: No changes.

FLYWEIGHTS: No changes.

JUNIOR FLYWEIGHTS: Following a kayo of Alex Sanchez, Jose Victor Burgos takes over the number-nine position from inactive Zolani Petelo. Also, Mhikiza Myekeni's win over Wendyl Janiola allows the South African to replace Janiola at number 10.

STRAWWEIGHTS: No changes.

POUND-FOR-POUND: Roy Jones regains the top spot following his win over Ruiz, while Bernard Hopkins falls from first to second. ■

THE RING RATINGS

For Period Ended March 11, 2003

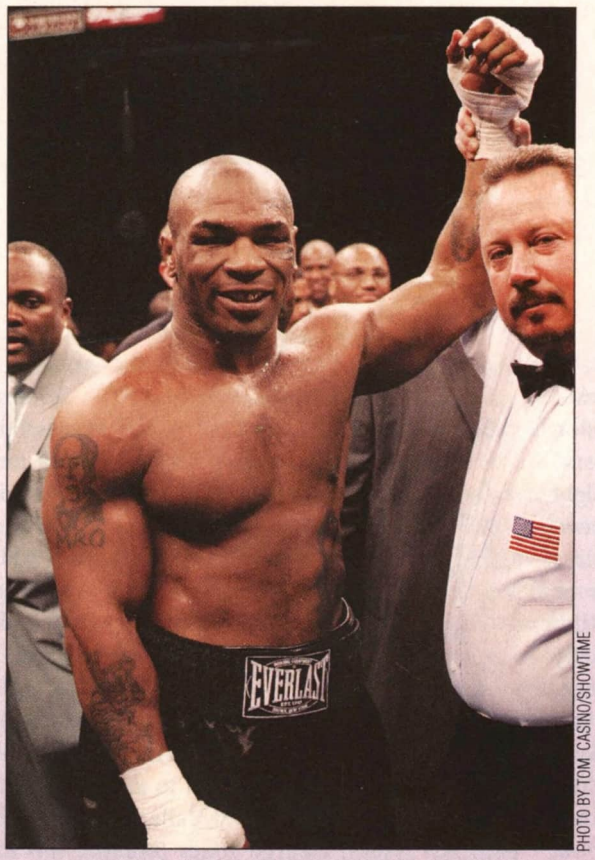


PHOTO BY TOM CASINO/SHOWTIME

Mike Tyson kayoed Cliff Etienne and climbed from ninth to seventh at heavyweight

How Our Ratings Are Compiled

Fighters recognized as champions by THE RING are rated at the top of their division, with the top 10 contenders listed below.

Championship vacancies can be filled in one of two ways: by unifying all three alphabet titles in a division; or by winning a box-off between THE RING'S number-one and number-two contenders, or, in certain instances, a box-off between our number-one and number-three contenders.

The only three occasions when a fighter will lose his championship status are when he retires, moves to another weight division, or is defeated in a championship bout.

Ratings By The Editors
Records By Fight Fax Inc.

HEAVYWEIGHTS
Weight Unlimited

Champ: LENNOX LEWIS
England 40-2-1 (31)

1. **CHRIS BYRD**
Flint, MI 36-2 (20)
2. **DAVID TUA**
New Zealand 42-3 (37)
3. **CORRIE SANDERS**
South Africa 39-2 (29)
4. **ROY JONES**
Pensacola, FL 48-1 (38)
5. **EVANDER HOLYFIELD**
Fairburn, GA 38-6-2 (25)
6. **HASIM RAHMAN**
Baltimore, MD 35-4 (29)
7. **MIKE TYSON**
Catskill, NY 50-4 (44)
8. **WLADIMIR KLITSCHKO**
Ukraine 40-2 (37)
9. **JOHN RUIZ**
Chelsea, MA 38-5-1 (27)
10. **VITALI KLITSCHKO**
Ukraine 32-1 (31)

JR. MIDDLEWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 154 pounds

Champ: OSCAR DE LA HOYA
Los Angeles, CA 35-2 (28)

1. **WINKY WRIGHT**
St. Petersburg, FL 45-3 (25)
2. **FERNANDO VARGAS**
Oxnard, CA 22-2 (20)
3. **JAVIER CASTILLEJO**
Spain 54-5 (36)
4. **DANIEL SANTOS**
Puerto Rico 26-2-1 (20)
5. **SHANE MOSLEY**
Pomona, CA 38-2 (35)
6. **KASSIM OUMA**
W. Palm Beach, FL 17-1-1 (12)
7. **BRONCO McKART**
Monroe, MI 45-4 (29)
8. **ALEX GARCIA**
Mexico 26-0 (25)
9. **VERNO PHILLIPS**
Aurora, CO 34-8-1 (18)
10. **ALEX BUNEMA**
Dallas, TX 20-3-2 (12)

FEATHERWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 126 pounds

Champ: MARCO ANTONIO BARRERA
Mexico 56-3 (39)

1. **ERIK MORALES**
Mexico 43-1 (32)
2. **JUAN MANUEL MARQUEZ**
Mexico 40-2 (32)
3. **NASEEM HAMED**
England 36-1 (31)
4. **DERRICK GAINER**
Pensacola, FL 38-5-1 (24)
5. **MANUEL MEDINA**
Mexico 60-13 (27)
6. **JOHNNY TAPIA**
Albuquerque, NM 52-3-2 (28)
7. **FRANKIE TOLEDO**
Paterson, NJ 42-6-1 (17)
8. **SCOTT HARRISON**
Scotland 18-1-1 (9)
9. **LEHLO LEDWABA**
South Africa 33-2-1 (22)
10. **WILLIAM ABELYAN**
Glendale, CA 21-4-1 (11)

JR. FEATHERWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 122 pounds

Champ: PAULIE AYALA
Ft. Worth, TX 34-2 (12)

1. **MANNY PACQUIAO**
Philippines 35-2-1 (26)
2. **OSCAR LARIOS**
Mexico 47-3-1 (33)
3. **SALIM MEDJKOUNE**
France 40-3-1 (21)
4. **ENRIQUE SANCHEZ**
Mexico 30-2-2 (21)
5. **ISRAEL VAZQUEZ**
Mexico 33-3 (24)
6. **WILLIE JORRIN**
Sacramento, CA 28-1-1 (12)
7. **JOSE LUIS VALBUENA**
Venezuela 21-2-1 (12)
8. **JOAN GUZMAN**
Dominican Republic 18-0 (14)
9. **OSAMU SATO**
Japan 26-2-2 (15)
10. **YODDAMRONG SITHYODTHONG**
Thailand 33-1-1 (16)

BANTAMWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 118 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **RAFAEL MARQUEZ**
Mexico 29-3 (27)
2. **VEERAPOL SAHAPROM**
Thailand 40-1-1 (29)
3. **TIM AUSTIN**
Cincinnati, OH 25-1-1 (22)
4. **JOHNNY BREDAHL**
Denmark 53-2 (26)
5. **EIDY MOYA**
Venezuela 15-2 (8)
6. **CRUZ CARBAJAL**
Mexico 22-11-1 (18)
7. **TOSHIAKI NISHIOKA**
Japan 23-3-2 (14)
8. **PETE FRISSINA**
Tarpon Springs, FL 26-3-1 (15)
9. **SILENCE MABUZA**
South Africa 13-0 (12)
10. **GENARO GARCIA**
Mexico 28-4 (16)

CRUISERWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 190 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **VASSILIY JIROV** Kazakhstan 31-0 (27)
2. **JEAN-MARC MORMECK** France 29-2 (21)
3. **WAYNE BRAITHWAITE** Guyana 19-0 (16)
4. **JAMES TONEY** Ann Arbor, MI 65-4-2 (42)
5. **JOHNNY NELSON** England 42-12-2 (28)
6. **GUILLERMO JONES** Panama 29-2-2 (22)
7. **EZRA SELLERS** Washington, D.C. 26-5 (24)
8. **O'NEIL BELL** Atlanta, GA 19-1-1 (18)
9. **VIRGIL HILL** Bismarck, ND 48-4 (23)
10. **SEBASTIAN ROTHMAN** South Africa 16-1-2 (12)

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 175 pounds

Champ: ROY JONES Pensacola, FL 48-1 (38)

1. **ANTONIO TARVER** Orlando, FL 20-1 (17)
2. **DARIUSZ MICHALCZEWSKI** Germany 47-0 (37)
3. **ERIC HARDING** Philadephia, PA 21-2-1 (7)
4. **MONTELL GRIFFIN** Chicago, IL 44-3 (29)
5. **MEHDI SAHNOUNE** France 24-0 (21)
6. **JULIO GONZALEZ** Huntington Beach, CA 32-1 (21)
7. **BRUNO GIRARD** France 42-3-2 (7)
8. **LOU DEL VALLE** Bronx, NY 31-3-1 (21)
9. **GEORGE JONES** Paterson, NJ 19-2 (13)
10. **CLINTON WOODS** England 33-2 (19)

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 168 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **JOE CALZAGHE** Wales 35-0 (28)
2. **SVEN OTTKE** Germany 29-0 (6)
3. **ANTWUN ECHOLS** Davenport, IA 29-4-1 (26)
4. **ERIC LUCAS** Canada 36-4-3 (13)
5. **BYRON MITCHELL** Ozark, AL 25-1-1 (18)
6. **CHARLES BREWER** Philadelphia, PA 39-9 (27)
7. **MADS LARSEN** Denmark 43-1 (36)
8. **MANUEL SIACA** Puerto Rico 16-4 (15)
9. **ANTHONY MUNDINE** Australia 17-1 (13)
10. **MARKUS BEYER** Germany 26-1 (11)

MIDDLEWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 160 pounds

Champ: BERNARD HOPKINS Philadelphia, PA 41-2-1 (30)

1. **HARRY SIMON** Namibia 23-0 (17)
2. **WILLIAM JOPPY** Washington, D.C. 34-2-1 (25)
3. **HOWARD EASTMAN** England 36-1 (33)
4. **ROBERT ALLEN** Atlanta, GA 34-4 (25)
5. **TITO MENDOZA** Panama 27-4 (20)
6. **SERGEY TATEVOSYAN** Russia 16-3 (12)
7. **HASSINE CHERIFI** France 33-6-1 (20)
8. **RODNEY JONES** Lafayette, LA 27-3 (17)
9. **ERLAND BETARE** France 35-7-2 (16)
10. **CARL DANIELS** St. Louis, MO 48-4-1 (30)

WELTERWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 147 pounds

Champ: RICARDO MAYORGA Nicaragua 24-3-1 (22)

1. **VERNON FORREST** Atlanta, GA 35-1 (26)
2. **ANTONIO MARGARITO** Mexico 28-3 (19)
3. **THOMAS DAMGAARD** Denmark 32-0 (25)
4. **ANTONIO DIAZ** Coachella, CA 37-4-1 (26)
5. **CORY SPINKS** St. Louis, MO 30-2 (11)
6. **MICHELE PICCIRILLO** Italy 37-1 (23)
7. **MANUEL GOMEZ** Mexico 21-10 (16)
8. **ANDREW LEWIS** Guyana 22-2-1 (20)
9. **JAWAID KHALIQ** England 21-1-1 (13)
10. **RAY OLIVEIRA** New Bedford, MA 44-8-2 (21)

JR. WELTERWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 140 pounds

Champ: KOSTYA TSZYU Australia 30-1-1 (24)

1. **SHARMBA MITCHELL** Washington, D.C. 51-3 (30)
2. **ZAB JUDAH** Brooklyn, NY 28-1 (21)
3. **ARTURO GATTI** Jersey City, NJ 35-6 (28)
4. **DeMARCUS CORLEY** Washington, D.C. 28-1-1 (16)
5. **VIVIAN HARRIS** Brooklyn, NY 22-1-1 (16)
6. **MICKY WARD** Lowell, MA 38-12 (27)
7. **OKTAY URKAL** Germany 32-1 (10)
8. **BEN TACKIE** Ghana 24-3 (15)
9. **JESSE JAMES LEIJA** San Antonio, TX 43-6-2 (17)
10. **DIOBELYS HURTADO** Miami, FL 35-3-1 (23)

LIGHTWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 135 pounds

Champ: FLOYD MAYWEATHER Grand Rapids, MI 29-0 (20)

1. **JOSE LUIS CASTILLO** Mexico 46-6-1 (42)
2. **STEVE JOHNSTON** Denver, CO 35-2-1 (17)
3. **PAUL SPADAFORA** Pittsburgh, PA 36-0 (14)
4. **LEONARD DORIN** Canada 21-0 (7)
5. **JUAN LAZCANO** El Paso, TX 32-2-1 (24)
6. **ANGEL MANFREDY** Gary, IN 40-6-1 (29)
7. **ARTUR GRIGORIAN** Uzbekistan 36-0 (22)
8. **ALEJANDRO GONZALEZ** Mexico 48-5-1 (33)
9. **JULIEN LORCY** France 53-3-2 (37)
10. **JUAN GOMEZ TRINIDAD** Puerto Rico 23-2 (16)

JR. LIGHTWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 130 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **ACELINO FREITAS** Brazil 32-0 (29)
2. **JOEL CASAMAYOR** Miami, FL 29-1 (18)
3. **JESUS CHAVEZ** Mexico 38-2 (27)
4. **STEVE FORBES** Las Vegas, NV 22-1 (6)
5. **YODSANAN NANTHACHAI** Thailand 28-2-1 (24)
6. **PHILLIP NDOU** South Africa 29-1 (28)
7. **SIRIMONGKOL SINGMANASSAK** Thailand 41-1 (23)
8. **CARLOS HERNANDEZ** Bellflower, CA 38-3-1 (23)
9. **CASSIUS BALOYI** South Africa 28-1 (16)
10. **NATE CAMPBELL** Jacksonville, FL 23-1 (21)

JR. BANTAMWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 115 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **MASAMORI TOKUYAMA** North Korea 28-2-1 (8)
2. **ALEXANDER MUNOZ** Venezuela 23-0 (23)
3. **FERNANDO MONTIEL** Mexico 25-0-1 (19)
4. **LUIS PEREZ** Nicaragua 21-1 (14)
5. **MARTIN CASTILLO** Mexico 23-1 (14)
6. **FELIX MACHADO** Venezuela 22-4-1 (11)
7. **MAURICIO PASTRANA** Colombia 29-3-1 (19)
8. **LUIS BOLANO** Colombia 37-0 (28)
9. **OSCAR ANDRADE** Mexico 30-22-1 (17)
10. **KATSUSHIGE KAWASHIMA** Japan 23-2 (16)

FLYWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 112 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **ERIC MOREL** Madison, WI 32-0 (18)
2. **PONGSAKLEK WONJONGKAM** Thailand 45-2 (25)
3. **IRENE PACHECO** Colombia 27-0 (20)
4. **MZUKISI SIKALI** South Africa 27-4-2 (16)
5. **HAWK MAKEPULA** South Africa 20-2 (13)
6. **MALCOLM TUNACAO** Philippines 13-1-2 (9)
7. **PETER CULSHAW** England 23-1-1 (12)
8. **GERSON GUERRERO** Mexico 25-4 (19)
9. **OMAR NARVAEZ** Argentina 13-0-1 (7)
10. **DAMAEN KELLY** Ireland 18-1 (8)

JR. FLYWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 108 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **ROSENDO ALVAREZ** Nicaragua 31-2-1 (20)
2. **JORGE ARCE** Mexico 32-3-1 (24)
3. **BEBIS MENDOZA** Colombia 28-1 (23)
4. **PICHIT SIRIWAT** Thailand 25-2 (12)
5. **NELSON DIEPPA** Puerto Rico 19-2-2 (11)
6. **YOSAM CHOI** South Korea 24-2 (13)
7. **HIDENOBU HONDA** Japan 24-1 (12)
8. **MELCHOR COB CASTRO** Mexico 66-8-4 (30)
9. **JOSE VICTOR BURGOS** Mexico 30-13-2 (15)
10. **MHIKIZA MYEKENI** South Africa 17-1 (6)

STRAWWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 105 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **JOSE AGUIRRE** Mexico 29-1-1 (18)
2. **MIGUEL BARRERA** Colombia 19-0-2 (11)
3. **NOEL ARAMBULET** Venezuela 19-2-1 (10)
4. **ROBERTO LEYVA** Mexico 21-1-1 (18)
5. **CHANA PORPAOIN** Thailand 49-2-2 (17)
6. **KEITARO HOSHINO** Japan 22-9 (5)
7. **JOMA GAMBOA** Philippines 32-7-2 (22)
8. **DANIEL REYES** Colombia 28-1 (22)
9. **KERMIN GUARDIA** Colombia 33-2 (20)
10. **JUAN PALACIOS** Nicaragua 10-2 (8)

RYAN OUT LOUD

By Jeff Ryan

INSANITY PREVAILS

What in the name of Wacko Jacko has been going on in the Sweet Science? Things have gotten so strange, weird, and surreal that, if we didn't know better, we'd swear Congress had recently passed the Rod Serling Boxing Reform Act. It's tough to even begin to make sense out of a lot of what's been happening, and, consequently, the sport has become harder to predict than Christina Aguilera's next body piercing.

Here, submitted for your approval, are a few of the more bizarre occurrences as of late:

•**Mike Tyson gets a new tattoo:** Okay, so we thought the image of Chairman Mao on the ex-champ's bicep was a bit much. That was until a few days before his February outing against Clifford Etienne, when Tyson unveiled the strangest bit of facial art this side of Gene Simmons. Not a temporary tattoo for some online casino, but a permanent tribal design covering much of the left side of Iron Mike's mug.

"I just wanted to put something on my face," Tyson said, matter-of-factly. "I didn't like the way my face was looking."

The tattooing was merely one eerie episode in a two-week period that saw Tyson break training, claim he was sick, change his mind about fighting, change his mind about not fighting, flatten Etienne in a bout that was so easy it made you wonder why Tyson had experienced any prefight trepidation at all, and explain afterward that he's just a guy who likes to "get high" and spend time with his kids.

As frightening a thought as it might be, Michael Tyson appears to be turning into Michael Jackson. The parallels are spooky: Both are washed-up '80s megastars who struggle in vain to recapture their past glory, seem willing to do just about anything to draw attention to themselves, self-destruct during interviews, take extraordinary measures to change their appearances, keep jungle animals for pets, and do dumb things with their offspring when the cameras are rolling. At least Tyson didn't dangle his son off a balcony. Standing the kid on the dais at the final pre-fight press conference and undressing him, though, was awfully weird.

PHOTO BY TOM CASINO/SHOWTIME

Tyson shows off his one-week-old tat and his nine-month-old kid

Like Jackson, Tyson is a figure we can't seem to keep our eyes off of. Part of it is our fascination with watching a 10-car pileup of a life. And part of it is Tyson's stubborn refusal to suffer a career-ending upset at the hands of one of these handpicked victims like Etienne. Never mind "The Black Rhino's" china chin or foolish fight plan. The bottom line is that the headlines read, "Tyson By KO In 49 Seconds!" Watching "Kid Dynamite" flatten a guy is like watching Barry Bonds blast a home run, Jerry Rice run under a bomb, or Michael Jordan dunk over somebody. It's *still* one of the most breathtaking sights in sports.

Like it or not, this circus has a few more performances left.

•Tim (berrrrr!) Austin gets cut down and takes the Forrest with him: First, Nicaraguan Ricardo Mayorga huffed and puffed (more about that later) and blew welterweight king Vernon Forrest down in three rounds. Then Mexico's Rafael Marquez kayoed IBF bantamweight titlist Tim Austin in eight. That's two undefeated titleholders and two of the world's best fighters, pound-for-pound, being upset within three weeks of each other.

When favorites routinely roll over underdogs in world title bouts and entire cards on ESPN2's *Friday Night Fights* unfold as predicted, we tend to forget that boxing is a game in which fortunes can be changed in an eyeblink. The longshot doesn't have to win four games in a series, survive four rounds of 18 holes apiece, or hold his serve through two or three sets. All he has to do, as Mayorga and Marquez illustrated so vividly, is land a single punch from which the favorite can't fully recover.

With all due respect to the stylists, those chessmasters who win with jabs, foot movement, and the occasional combination that couldn't stagger a parakeet, it's reckless, rowdy, rock-'em, sock-'em robots like Mayorga, Marquez, and, yes, even Tyson, who make me love the game so much. As Ralph Kramden liked to say: *Bang! Zoom!*

•Sugar Shane says the pot's not sweet enough: Now we know what happened to all those accountants who used to work for Enron: They're employed as Mosley's financial advisers. How else to explain the brain-dead decision by the Mosley camp to turn down the offer of a $4.25-million payday for a September 13 rematch with Oscar De La Hoya?

Mosley and his daddy apparently forgot that NutraSweet Shane (a Sugar substitute) *lost* those two bouts against Forrest and thus shouldn't get too demanding. After all, no other fight out there for Mosley would come with anything close to a $4.25-million purse.

And yet, as we went to press, De La Hoya, after initially telling the greedy Mosleys to scram, was trying to keep the rematch alive. "The Golden Boy" was offering to take a pay cut from $12-million to $11.5-million, with that extra $500,000 going to the victor. Thus, Mosley would get $4.75-million if he won. What was the reason for De La Hoya's sudden gesture of good will? His learning that Fernando Vargas, originally thought to be Option II for September 13, doesn't want another crack at De La Hoya until 2004.

Here's some advice, Shane. Take the offer while you still have marquee value. A year from now, that offer won't be any greater. Your loss total, however, just might be.

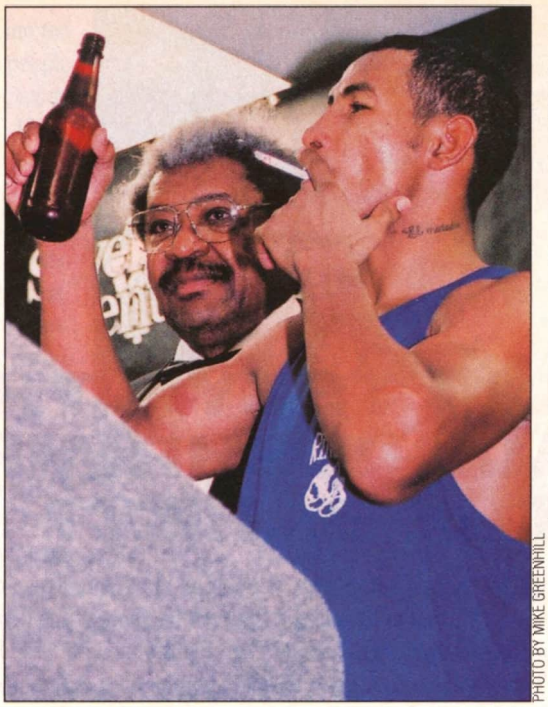


PHOTO BY MIKE GREENHILL

He may have some bad habits, but Mayorga has us addicted

•De La Hoya offers dinner party tips: Showing that he's not entirely out of touch with the common man, The Golden Boy agreed that a pay-per-view price of $49.95 for his tuneup against ringworn Yory Boy Campas was too steep. But then, proving that he's mostly out of touch with the common man, De La Hoya said, "If you get 40 or 50 people together and they each chip in a dollar or two, they can barbecue and drink some beer and watch the fight and have a good time."

Excuse me, Oscar, but most of us non-millionaires don't have living rooms, or even backyards, that can accommodate 40 or 50 people. Here's a better idea: Stop expecting $11-million purses for the fistic equivalent of taking batting practice, and persuade Bob Arum to lower the price of such a mismatch to about, oh, $14.95. Most fight fans can surely swing that—even without having to install a turnstile at the front door or pass a hat during the undercard.

•Marlboro Man Mayorga lights up the welters: As if anyone who saw him puffing away in the ring after dethroning Forrest has to be told, Mayorga is not your average pro athlete. When he's not in training, the Kool customer with the howitzer right cross smokes two packs of cigarettes a day. That's 40 butts every 24 hours, if you're scoring at home. To say this is a bit unconventional is an understatement. Let's put it this way: Walking a mile for a Camel is not supposed to be a part of a fighter's roadwork.

The best part about all this is that Mayorga is so unapologetic about it. More Pall Mall than Paul Berlenbach, he has flicked his ashes on the long-held belief that jocks shouldn't smoke, lest they adversely affect their lung capacity. So Mayorga might not be able to last 12 fast-paced rounds. So what. As long as his right hand lands so hard that it makes opponents think they were whacked in the head with a crystal ashtray, he doesn't have to.

Perhaps this flaunting of his bad habit is just Mayorga's way of getting into his rivals' heads, like a regular Cig Man Freud. Well, let's enjoy him while he lasts. In this era of nutritional supplements, hi-tech training gadgetry, and computerized body analyses, it's nice to see a guy rise to the top of his weight class without regard for defense, pacing, or the warnings of the Surgeon General. (And I'm not just blowing smoke here.) Mayorga is going to bring a lot more fun to the welters. At least until that day comes when somebody beats the tar—not to mention the nicotine—out of him. ■

DIGGING DEEP

By Ivan Goldman

DID TSZYU THROW TOO MANY SHRIMPS ON THE BARBY?

"Boxing is a funny thing. You blink your eyes and someone turns the lights off. It is important to be focused from the beginning to the end." Wise words from 140-pound champion Kostya Tszyu, days before his bout with Jesse James Leija.

Tszyu's lights didn't go off, but his timing was out to lunch and he took too many shots before Leija quit at the end of round six over a ruptured eardrum. Tszyu owns a reputation as a dedicated athlete, but sometimes reputations persist long after the facts have changed.

Word came to me from Down Under that Tszyu weighed up in the 180-pound range before going into camp. He fought only once in all of 2002—another indication that his dedication is not what it used to be.

With his training habits slipping like a beat-up transmission, it's not likely the 33-year-old Tszyu can rule the deepest division in boxing much longer. There's so much talent at junior welter, it's almost unfair for anybody to have to compete there.

You have Miguel Cotto, Vivian Harris, and Arturo Gatti. Sharmba Mitchell isn't going away either. The real question is whether slickster and former top gun Zab Judah can regain his place at the top with a squad of opponents like that standing in the way.

HIGH FINANCE: HBO, arguably the most powerful institution in boxing, is owned by conglomerate AOL Time Warner (AOL for short), a staggering media giant with a balance sheet so terrible it defies logic. AOL lost $98.7-billion last year. That's the biggest corporate loss ever recorded in American history, more than the value of all the goods and services produced that same year in Chile, a nation of 15 million people. And forecasts for this year don't look so hot either.

If the AOL suits at the top use their noodles, they won't interfere with HBO, which is one of the very few profitable parts of their collapsing empire. But with the parent company on life support, anything is possible. AOL stock shares lost about 90 percent of their value in the last three years. So far HBO remains dedicated to its boxing programming, though it started 2003 by drastically cutting the budget of its boxing Web site.

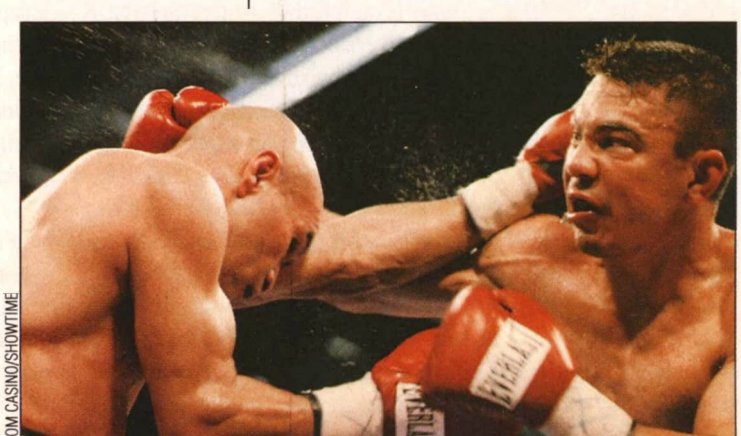


PHOTO BY TOM CASINO/SHOWTIME

Is Tszyu losing focus?

Down the street, media rival Viacom, owner of number-two boxing network Showtime, has done better, comparatively speaking. Its shares lost half their value in the same period. Unfortunately, somebody at Viacom chose to make deep cuts in the network's boxing program. Specific allocations are company secrets, but Showtime has clearly downsized its fistic ambitions.

PAY-PER-WHAT? The East and West Coasts are the Hatfields and McCoys of boxing. The intensity of the rivalry fluctuates, but it's always there.

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

Recently, Bob Arum tossed a cherry bomb into the bonfire by complaining that too many of the people with fight biz clout—he named HBO executives in particular—"all live and work out of New York, and I think that's unfortunate." Arum said there's "a real Eastern bias as to the fights they choose to air."

It's no secret that Las Vegas-based Arum has been concentrating his energy on Hispanic fighters, particularly Mexicans and Mexican-Americans, who have greater appeal in the West. Arum complains they don't get a fair shot at the larger purses that accompany fights on HBO and Showtime, so he has to put them on pay-per-view.

But that doesn't explain why we get pay-per-screwed for Oscar De La Hoya vs. Yory Boy Campas. There's no opponent on the planet so feeble or untalented that HBO would refuse to televise him on its regular channel if he's fighting its Numero Uno De La Hoya. Putting this one on pay-per-view isn't just a swindle. It's a mugging.

Fernando Vargas blew out Campas in seven rounds more than four years ago. Since then, Oba Carr and Daniel Santos have stopped him. Campas has slowed down to the speed of fourth-class mail. He's easier to find than a poker machine at a Las Vegas bar.

ANOTHER PITY: Don King has so many fighters under contract, he seems to forget about some of them for months or years at a time. Exciting titleholders Ricardo Lopez and Tim Austin got lost like socks in the laundry. Ultimately Lopez retired with a record of 50-0-1 (37). Now the determined Rafael Marquez dethroned Austin, handing him his first loss. At 31, Austin has likely passed his prime without a signature fight or a purse worthy of his talent.

MAGOO-A-RAMA: Seems like it's been raining Magoos. Let's start with Thailand's Noparat Scricharoen, a judge in Melbourne who gave Tszyu all six rounds over Leija. I had Leija winning two. It was impossible not to give Leija the second round, which he dominated from end to end.

Truman Capote said of Jack Kerouac's stream-of-consciousness novel *On The Road*, "That's not writing. It's typing." Likewise, Scricharoen's output is not scoring. It's writing. Stanley Christodoulou of South Africa had it 58-56, and Aneeka Williams of Australia scored it 59-55.

Another Magoo to referee Malcolm Bulner, who cautioned Leija several times for low blows while not noticing local hero Tszyu's frequent rabbit punches on the break.

And across the ocean in Temecula, California, Nate Campbell almost pulled it off against Joel Casamayor. But not according to judge Robert Mendoza, who scored it 98-92 for unanimous decision winner Casamayor. I was ringside for this punishing lightweight contest on the HBO undercard of Ricardo Mayorga's stunning third-round stoppage of Vernon Forrest. Writers around me whose opinions I value all had it close. Carlos Arias from the *Orange County Register* and Ramiro Gonzalez of *La Opinion* scored it a draw. Robert Morales of the *Pasadena Star-News* had Campbell by one point. I scored it 96-94 Casamayor. Judge Chuck Hassett had it 96-94 and Jerry Cantu saw it 97-93, both for the winner. Mendoza, who could find only two rounds for Campbell, placed himself deep in Magoo-land.

The final Magoo was a group effort:

When Rocky Juarez knocked down Jason Pires in the second round of their scheduled 12-rounder, televised by Showtime, Pires went down so hard his head bounced off the canvas. That's always ominous.

When the gutsy Pires got up, he wasn't the same. But his corner, the ring doctors hired by the Mohegan Sun Arena tribal commission in Connecticut, and referee Frank Capuccino all let him go on to take a useless beating. When Pires went down at the end of round eight, he hit face-first.

Capuccino finally waved it off in round nine, but it was a stain on all of the above for letting this one continue so long. Just because a hurt, courageous fighter can throw weakened, hopeless punches, that doesn't mean he's defending himself.

Magoos all around.

FLAMING MAGOO: When Larry Merchant bestowed a cigarette on Mayorga after his victory, it had all the entertainment value of Michael Jackson dangling his kid over a balcony. Merchant can do better than this. ■

PHOTO BY TOM CASINO/SHOWTIME

Juarez punishes Pires

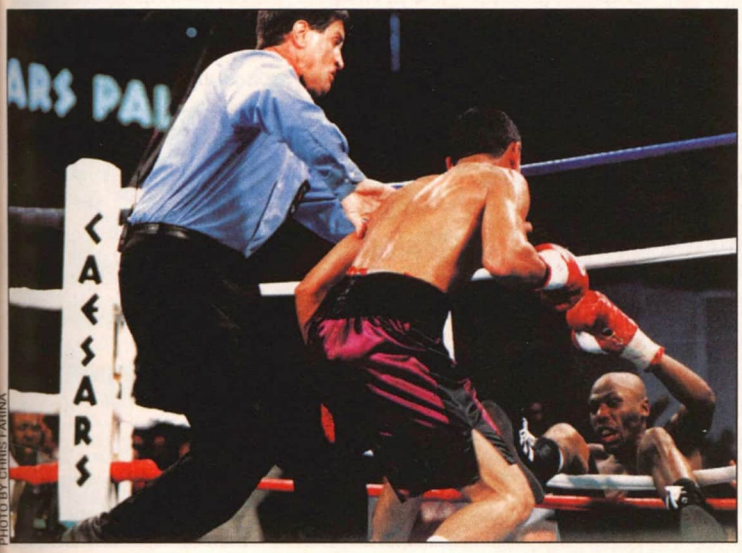


PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

Marquez puts the previously undefeated Austin through the ropes

THE JAMES SHULER MEMORIAL GYM

IF YOU GO

Location: 750 N. Brooklyn Street, Philadelphia, PA 19104; phone: 215-662-5665.

Directions: By car, take I-76 east and get off at the Girard Avenue/ Philadelphia Zoo exit. Turn right onto Girard Avenue and go about a mile. Turn left onto 42nd Street and proceed approximately one more mile. Turn right onto Lancaster Avenue, then take a quick left onto Brooklyn Street. The gym is located on the right at the end of the block, above a car detailing shop, and can be identified by the Shuler's Gym sign hanging out front.

Membership: Adults: $25 monthly fee for all facilities. Kids: $15 monthly. Minors must have permission from their parents to train. Open 12 p.m.-7 p.m. Monday through Saturday. Closed on Sunday.

Who to look out for: Besides the fighters and trainers already mentioned, you will also see former IBF junior middleweight titleholder Robert Hines training fighters at Shuler's. Philadelphia's boxing twins, Aaron and Eric Mitchell, also work out there.

Advice to greenhorns: Shuler's is a real boxing gym and no place for autograph-seekers or folks looking for a casual workout. For boxers serious about training, it's good to be there between 4 p.m. and 6 p.m., especially if you want to get some good sparring.

Custus chats with Mack and Clinton Woods during a sparring session

Text by Joe Santoliquito
Photos by Fred Calloway

The eyes peering down from the large cardboard poster of James Shuler seem to follow the fighters as they jump rope, hit the bag, shadowbox, and spar. Shuler would be smiling, if the former middleweight contender were alive today to see the gym in West Philadelphia that bears his name.

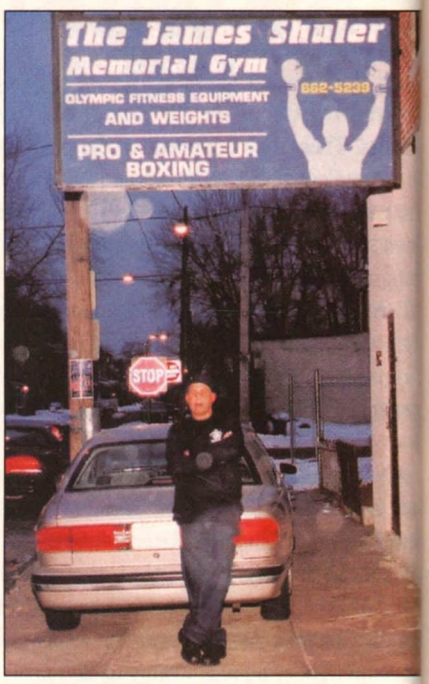
Shuler, who fought Tommy Hearns on March 10, 1986, was tragically killed later that month in a motorcycle accident. Shuler's friends, led by Percy "Buster" Custus, decided to purchase a building in '94 above a car retail shop on tiny Brooklyn Street and call it The James Shuler Memorial Gym.

"This place was God inspired," said Custus, who is the proprietor of Shuler's and the trainer of super middleweight prospect Yusef Mack. "It was a detail shop downstairs, and I bought the building. It was nothing but a big empty space when I got it. We turned it into something nice. My job is to take these kids somewhere. All they're looking for is a chance, and this is the place I hope gives them that chance."

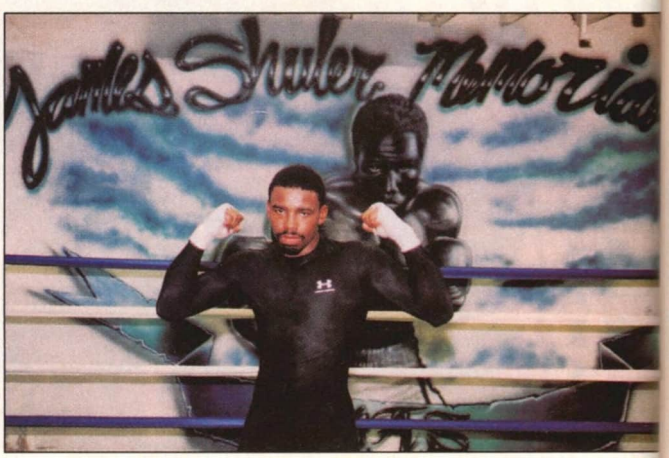
Custus doesn't discriminate. Every level of fighter trains at Shuler's, from top pros to pre-teen kids learning the fundamentals. Three or four times a year, Custus holds shows at the small gym, which can fit about 30 boxers during workout time.

Some of the more famous fighters who have worked out of Shuler's include world middleweight champion Bernard Hopkins, former WBA super middleweight titlist Frankie Liles, former IBF light heavyweigh beltholder William Guthrie, and heavyweights Michael Grant and Alex Stewart.

Former WBC and WBA heavyweigh titlist Tim Witherspoon is a regular a Shuler's, training young fighters such his son, Tim Jr., or giving guidance to established pros such as light heavyweight con-

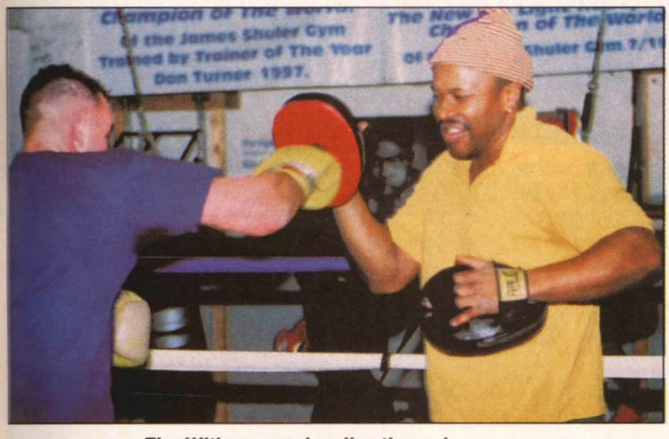


Owner Buster Custus guards the entrance

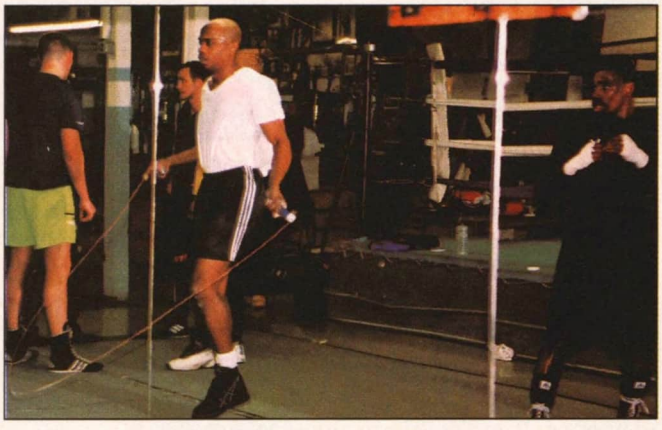


Prospect Yusef Mack poses in the shadow of Shuler

Shuler's: A nice, clean place to get serious work done



Tim Witherspoon handles the pads



You don't have to be inside the ring to get a good workout

tender Clinton Woods, who was working out at Shuler's when THE RING visited in late-February.

Woods came to Shuler's from Sheffield, England, looking for competitive sparring, and was impressed by what he found.

"I heard about Shuler's through Tim Witherspoon," said Woods, who gave a good account of himself against Roy Jones in September '02, before being stopped in the sixth round. "I haven't been here long, but I love the place. There's no one to spar in England. The gyms in England are becoming yuppie-style.

"This place is nice, it has character, which is something you don't get from those new, fancy, modern gyms. This place is small and clean, and you get good work here."

Unlike many hole-in-the-wall gyms that produce great fighters, Shuler's is a place where fighters don't have to worry about rats scurrying by their feet. The neat-and-tidy gym is separated into two areas: a boxing center that includes three heavybags, a small area for shadowboxing and jumping rope, and one ring. Then there is a conditioning area that has assorted weights and exercise machines.

There's no shortage of boxing photos on the walls

"This is a family-oriented environment, where everyone cares about everyone else," Witherspoon said. "You won't find that at too many other gyms. This place was all for James."

You get the feeling that James Shuler would approve. ■

CAMERA CLICKS

PHOTO BY SCOTT ROMER

If you thought Charlie's Angels were tough, wait till you see these three ladies in action. Female fighters Fredia Gibbs, Mia St. John, and Laila Ali all met up recently in Louisville, Kentucky, on the weekend of Ali's fight with Mary Ann Almager. Under normal circumstances, we'd say Laila is by far the best fighter among the trio, but with those enormous rings on her fingers, Mia could certainly be dangerous as well.

Four score and seven years ago, Jorge Paez began hi pro career, and here he is still fighting.

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

Bob Arum presents his favorite fighter, "Pretty Boy" Floyd Mayweather, with his Ring *lightweight championship belt at a recent press conference. We know Mayweather and Uncle Bob haven't exactly been getting along swimmingly of late, but would it kill Arum to smile just a little bit for the cameras?*

We know what you're thinking: What are Jimmy Lennon Jr. and Don King doing with two of the Culkin kids? Actually, those are Lennon's kids, and he didn't want to leave them "home alone," so he brought them along to the fights and let them hang out with DK.

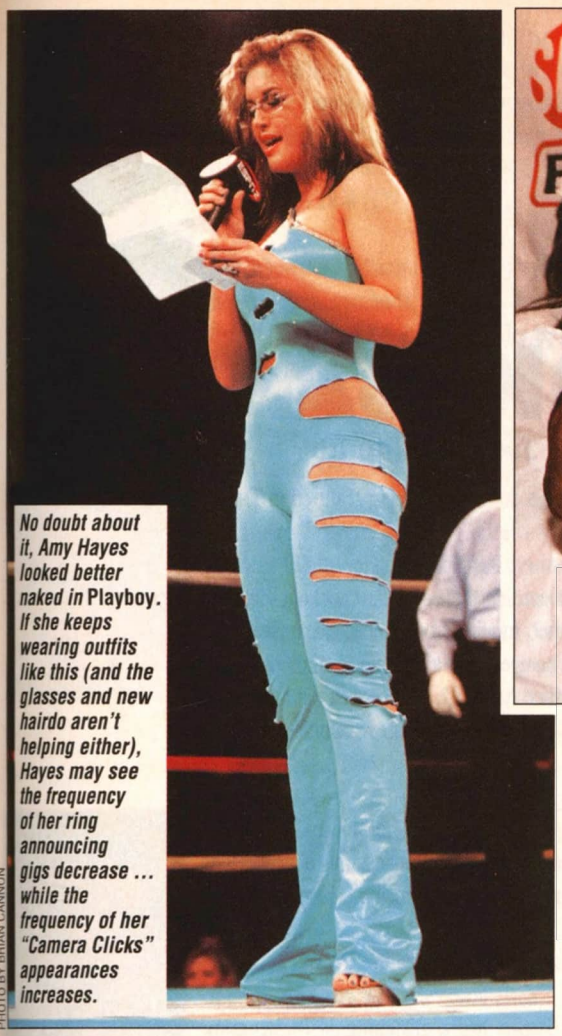


PHOTO BY BRIAN CANNON

No doubt about it, Amy Hayes looked better naked in Playboy. *If she keeps wearing outfits like this (and the glasses and new hairdo aren't helping either), Hayes may see the frequency of her ring announcing gigs decrease ... while the frequency of her "Camera Clicks" appearances increases.*

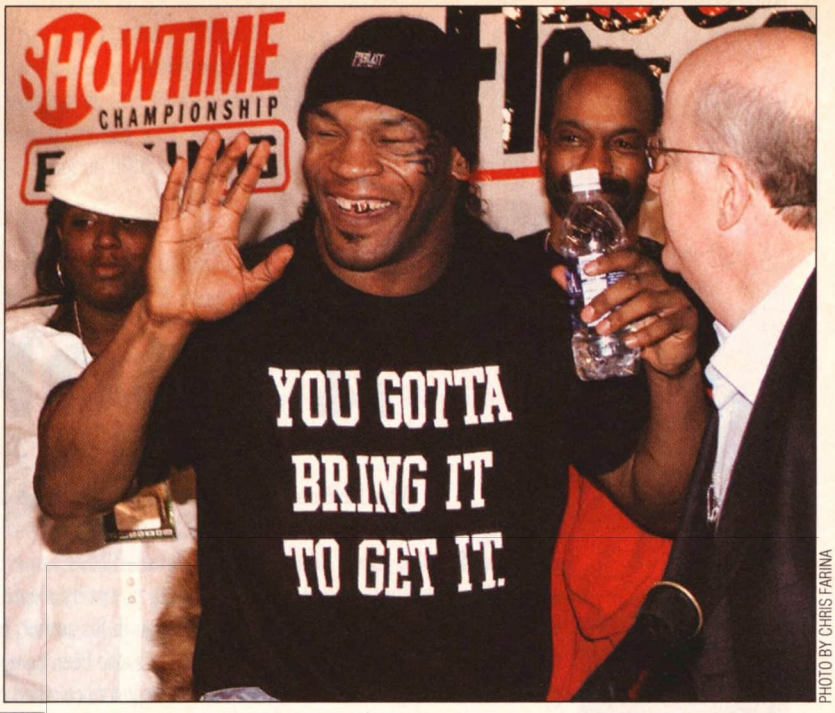


PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

Maybe Clifford Etienne should've been the one wearing this T-shirt, since he tried to "bring it" against Mike Tyson on February 22 in Memphis, and he definitely "got it" as a result. Too bad for Etienne that Tyson wasn't in quite as jovial a mood once the bell rang as he was when this picture was taken.

NOSTALGIA CORNER

PHOTO BY TEDDY BLACKBURN

Two fallen champions came together in late-February, when Gerald McClellan and Greg Page, both of whom have suffered serious ring injuries, were honored at a fundraising dinner in Rockford, Illinois. If you'd like to make a donation to help McClellan, send it to Gerald McClellan Trust, c/o Fifth Third Bank, P.O. Box 120, Freeport, IL 61032. If you'd like to make a donation to benefit Page, you can send it to The Friends of Greg Page, c/o any Fifth Third Bank, or send to 208 W. Kenwood Way, Louisville, KY 40214.

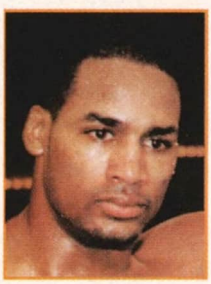
Back in the 1920s, you had your fair share of women who didn't enter the workplace, but French featherweight contender Eugene Criqui's wife wasn't one of them. Thanks perhaps to his wife helping him cool off during training, Criqui went on to win the world featherweight title from Johnny Kilbane a couple of weeks later.

NEW FACES

A LOOK BACK

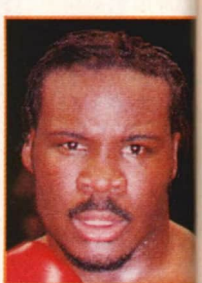
Compiled by Joe Santoliquito

What have our most recent "New Faces" been doing since being featured in THE RING? An update:



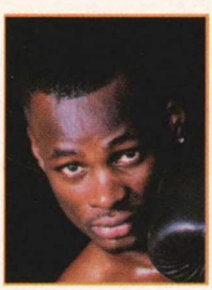
Jerson Ravelo, super middleweight (October 2001 issue): Ravelo has gone 7-0 (5) since he appeared in THE RING, showing some promising power by recording three straight knockout victories early in 2002. However, he's undergone a change in his corner, moving from trainer Oscar Suarez to former Olympic gold medalist Mark Breland. He's also been hampered by a back injury and has undergone two hand surgeries. Ravelo, who has fought just once since April '02, had the cast removed from his second surgery in mid-March and was scheduled to come back in late-May or early-June.

Record: 12-0 (8)



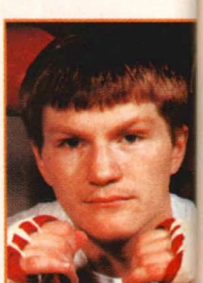
Randy Griffin, light heavyweight (November 2001 issue): The Philadelphia-based Griffin isn't looking like much of a prospect anymore. Since suffering a six-round unanimous decision loss to James Lubwama back on May 10, 2002, Griffin has fought only once, scoring a six-round decision winner over a fighter he had previously kayoed in two rounds.

Record: 12-1 (8)



Andre Purlett, heavyweight (December 2001 issue): Purlett had a glistening 31-0 (28) mark when he was featured as a "New Face," but the heavyweight from Guyana was exposed as lacking in both the chin and the heart departments when he took his first major step up in opposition to face Eliecer Castillo on January 4, 2002. Purlett fell via fifth-round knockout, and has since come back with two meaningless knockout wins.

Record: 34-1 (31)



Ricky Hatton, junior welterweight (January 2002 issue): "The Hitman" has been featured on Showtime five times now and has turned into by far the biggest attraction in this group of "New Faces." He appears to be in line for a title shot sometime either this year or next. Hatton, 7-0 (5) since being featured in THE RING, has successfully made the adjustment to better opposition, beating the likes of Eamonn Magee and Freddie Pendleton, but he had a dangerous fight with Vince Phillips scheduled as we went to press.

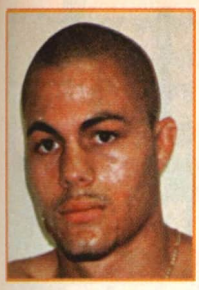
Record: 31-0 (24)

Jim Rock, middleweight (February 2002 issue): Rock has been a total bust, going 1-2 since appearing in THE RING. The Irishman lost a six-round decision to Ian Cooper in December '01 and suffered a ninth-round knockout loss to Takaloo in February '03. "The Pink Panther" may be better off shifting his focus from boxing to his gig as a personal trainer for one of the Spice Girls.

Record: 21-3 (6)

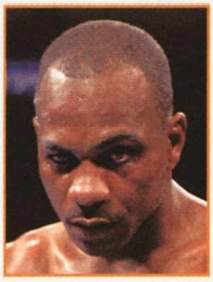
Kassim Ouma, junior middleweight (March 2002 issue): The talented Ouma is the only member of this "New Faces" group to work his way into THE RING's top-10 rankings, and he currently resides at number six at 154 pounds after scoring wins over fringe contenders Michael Lerma and Jason Papillion. But "The Dream" was slowed after suffering two gunshot wounds in a drive-by shooting on December 1, 2002. Ouma is expected back sometime this summer.

Record: 17-1-1 (12)



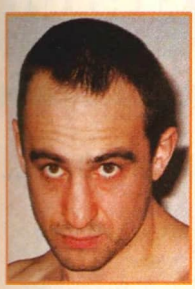
Kermit Cintron, welterweight (April 2002 issue): "The Killer" is emerging as one of the hardest punching welterweights in the world today, and his three kayo wins on *ShoBox* have elevated his status tremendously. Since appearing in THE RING, Cintron has gone 6-0 (6), has had hand surgery from which he seems to have recovered well, and will look to introduce his power to an even wider audience this spring by fighting on NBC.

Record: 18-0 (17)



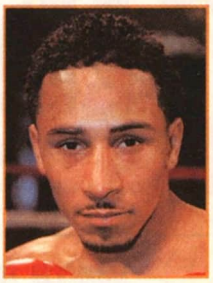
DaVarryl Williamson, heavyweight (May 2002 issue): Considered undersized by today's heavyweight standards, the heavy-handed "Touch Of Sleep" nonetheless broke through and established himself as a fringe contender by stopping the much larger Corey Sanders in five rounds on July 26, 2002, on ESPN2's *Friday Night Fights*. Williamson followed that with a 10-round decision over tough Robert Wiggins—a bout in which Williamson had his jaw broken. Despite the injury, the 34-year-old Williamson is expected to fight at least two more times by the end of this year.

Record: 18-1 (16)



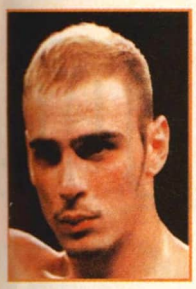
Andre Trunov, junior middleweight (June 2002 issue): The Ukrainian was in the unique situation of living in the United States on a specialized visa for professional athletes, but his status was dependent upon how successful he was in the ring. Trunov may have to start worrying about deportation, because he's gone a dismal 1-5 since appearing in THE RING.

Record: 9-5 (5)



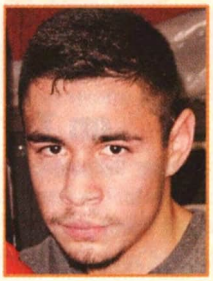
Andre Eason, junior welterweight (July 2002 issue): Eason's momentum has slowed since his appearance in THE RING. He fought and won four more times in '02, but against feeble opposition, and he generally failed to excite. Eason, who was scheduled for a tough bout against Anthony Washington just after this magazine went to press, has shown adequate boxing ability, but it looks as if he lacks the punch to scare world-class junior welters.

Record: 12-1 (5)



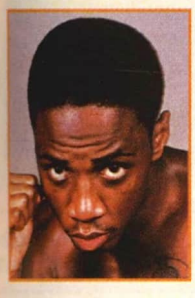
Kelly Pavlik, middleweight (August 2002 issue): Pavlik has continued to show potential in his four fights since being a "New Face," but his opposition has remained fairly soft—as you might expect for a marketable fighter who's barely 21 years old. "The Ghost" is getting good exposure from his promoter, Top Rank, and his second-round knockout of veteran Eduardo Gutierrez in his most recent fight was probably his most impressive pro victory.

Record: 16-0 (15)



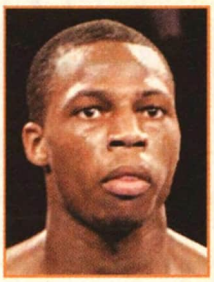
Oscar Diaz, junior welterweight (September 2002 issue): Diaz has continued to impress as his competition level has risen, having gone 4-0 (3) since appearing in THE RING. Duva Boxing wants to get Diaz at least five fights this year. He started out '03 with a fifth-round knockout of Benito Rodriguez on January 31.

Record: 12-0 (9) with 1 no-contest



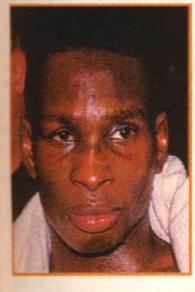
Malik Scott, heavyweight (October 2002 issue): The lean, skillful Scott made a successful transition to a higher level with a second-round knockout of veteran Terry McGroom on February 1, 2003. Main Events now needs to get the busy Philadelphia heavyweight (seven fights in '02) more TV exposure.

Record: 15-0 (9)



Chad Dawson, super middleweight (November 2002 issue): Dawson showed resilience in getting up after hitting the canvas for the first time as a pro, coming back to beat Shannon Miller by six-round unanimous decision on February 1, 2003. He's only 20 years old and has been moving at a comfortable pace, winning all three of his fights since appearing in THE RING.

Record: 10-0 (6)



Clarence Vinson, bantamweight (December 2002 issue): The '00 Olympic bronze medalist has fought just once since appearing in THE RING, winning a unanimous 10-round decision over Idelfonso Martinez—probably his best opponent so far—on November 24, 2002. He was slowed by bruised ribs in January, but is hoping to fight at least four times this year.

Record: 11-0 (5)

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NOW WHAT ROY?

How Jones Matches Up Against The Heavyweight Elite

By Joe Santoliquito

PHOTOS BY WILL HART/HBO

Roy Jones' new physique bulged slightly through his powder blue sweatsuit as he leisurely strolled through Caesars Palace about six hours before challenging WBA heavyweight titleholder John Ruiz. He looked different from the Roy Jones we're used to seeing; his neck was thicker, his face fuller. Some fans still recognized the blown-up light heavyweight champ tucked under a white bucket hat, while other passersby wondered what all the fuss was about.

There was no tension on Jones' face, no twinge of nervous energy, no symptoms of anxiety as he graciously played the role of celebrity casino greeter, shaking hands and receiving hugs, even stopping to pose for pictures with adoring fans. Jones did all this with aplomb that said that he knew something no one else did. He certainly didn't appear to be unduly concerned about the historical step he was about to take against a legitimate heavyweight at least 30 pounds heavier than him.

"It's confidence, it's all about confidence, man," said a smiling Jones. "I'm going to knock John Ruiz out."

While Jones didn't deliver on his pre-fight promise of a knockout, he convinced the world that he belongs among today's heavyweight elite with an emphatic 12-round unanimous decision over Ruiz in front of 15,300 fans at the Thomas & Mack Center in Las Vegas and a surprisingly large pay-per-view audience.

While the early-March victory enabled Jones to join Michael Spinks as the second light heavyweight champion to move up and win a heavyweight belt, it should be stressed that Spinks won the linear heavyweight championship by beating the previously undefeated Larry Holmes in 1985. Title-wise, all that was at stake in the Jones-Ruiz bout was a bogus belt from a tainted organization.

But that doesn't detract from the fact that Jones successfully moved up in weight and dominated a fighter who went into the match as THE RING's number-five heavyweight contender. Moreover, Jones' victory stirred speculation about a number of fascinating matchups awaiting him if he continues to campaign as a heavyweight. Equally important, the approximately 525,000 pay-per-view buys that generated roughly $26.5-million in revenue (all-time highs for Jones) proved that Jones, 14 years into his career, has finally become a significant PPV attraction. This changed the financial dynamic, making matches between Jones and the biggest names in the heavyweight division a distinct possibility.

The mind boggles at the potential scenarios: Jones against Lennox Lewis for the genuine world heavyweight title, or a battle of the living legends between Jones and Evander Holyfield. Significant numbers would also probably pay to see if Jones could solve the puzzle presented by elusive Chris Byrd. Then there's a Jones-Mike Tyson blockbuster that could conceivably become the biggest money-spinner in boxing history. In fact, just hours after the Ruiz fight, Las Vegas oddsmakers installed Jones as a 2-1 favorite over Iron Mike.

Still, when presented with the issue of whether or not he would stay at heavyweight, Jones wavered.

"I did this to make history, but I really don't know what I'm going to do," said Jones, who received a career-best $10-million. "I know one thing, it's going to take a lot of money for me to fight somebody else that size. When I first looked at tape of Ruiz, I was like, 'How in the heck am I going to beat him?'"

For years boxing fans and media alike demanded more from "Reluctant Roy" than he was delivering. We wanted to see him fulfill his vast potential, and we wanted him to understand that there was more to boxing than just winning. If he wasn't fortunate enough to be in a division where he could be tested by qualified challengers, we at least wanted boxing's Michael Jordan to drop 50 points on the Cleveland Cavaliers every night. Instead, Jones teased us with moments of brilliance, followed by long stretches of indifference. He had kept much of his arsenal locked tight since last putting it on full display when he beat James Toney for

Jones pumps his fist as he enters the ring, continuing to display the unwavering confidence he was showing in the days leading up to the Ruiz fight. Though Jones fell short of the knockout he predicted, he backed up every other boast he made.

the IBF super middleweight belt in 1994.

The Ruiz fight forced him to give more of himself. For once, Jones didn't have all the advantages. But despite fighting a larger man, what resulted was a typical one-sided Jones' performance. Perhaps best of all, Jones didn't run and hide, as many predicted he would, and was even willing to stand and trade when warranted.

"Roy was brilliant, simply brilliant," said Lou DiBella, the former senior vice president of HBO Sports who had been among Jones' harshest critics in the past. "That was Hall of Fame stuff. He looked great. It was really unbelievable. Roy played with the guy the whole night. Roy just proved that size difference doesn't make up the difference between brilliance and mediocrity."

Throughout the HBO Pay-Per-View broadcast, former heavyweight champ George Foreman anointed Jones as the biggest threat to world heavyweight champion Lennox Lewis.

"I think once you slay the giant, you're a giant slayer, and you become a giant yourself," Foreman said. "Roy Jones is a heavyweight champ, and I don't want to devalue Roy by saying he's not a real big champ. Size has nothing to do with anything. I'll say this, that in the first round, I was a little scared, because Roy got into a major scrap and stayed in there. But that said something.

"Roy stayed in there. He felt what Ruiz had to offer, then the cat was out of the bag; the suspense was gone. Now, if Roy wants to fight a heavyweight, the fear is not there anymore. He knows what it's like to get hit by a heavyweight with bad intentions. In my opinion, I think Roy would be equally matched with someone like Lennox Lewis right now. I think Roy can clean up the heavyweight division."

But is Jones willing to move up and fight a *real* giant like Lewis? That's a gray area Jones left undetermined. He does, however, have other heavyweight options. There's currently a crop of smallish heavyweights that range in the 215- to 225-pound category that could make attractive matchups, creating interest in a heavyweight class paralyzed by Lewis' inactivity.

"The division does become very interesting with someone like Roy in the mix, especially to smaller heavyweights like me," IBF heavyweight titlist Chris Byrd said. "As far as the bigger heavyweights go, I think Roy has the skills to compete, but he'll have problems as far as the super tall guys, like Lennox Lewis and Wladimir and Vitali Klitschko. They'll be tough to hit. The movement will be there, but to throw combinations against the taller guys is hard."

One thing is certain: Now we've had our taste of Jones as a heavyweight, and the verdict is in that we want more. Here's a hypothetical look at what might lie ahead for heavyweight contender Roy Jones.

Jones vs. Byrd: Jones loves collecting belts, and Byrd holds the IBF heavyweight bauble. And let's not forget that Byrd, 36-2 (20), is the closest in size to Jones among the top heavyweights. The 6'2" Byrd weighed 214 pounds in his 12-round victory over Holyfield for the vacant IBF belt in December '02. Jones may actually be the harder puncher, and Jones' reach is one inch longer than Byrd's.

The clash of styles, however, could turn into a borefest.

"Byrd is nothing in my book; he's absolutely nothing," said Foreman. "He slaps guys around and can't really punch like a full-sized heavyweight. Jones beats him."

Despite the potential for a dull fight, some find the Jones-Byrd match intriguing.

"If you like boxing, as opposed to two guys slugging it out, you'd like a Jones-Byrd fight," said ESPN2 *Friday Night Fights* studio analyst Max Kellerman. "Anyone that loves boxing loved the Wilfred Benitez-Sugar Ray Leonard fight, and this would be a heavyweight version of that. I see Jones winning a razor-close decision. Roy beats anyone under 230 pounds today."

Jones vs. Holyfield: Jones commented immediately after beating Ruiz that he had no desire to face Holyfield. "For me to beat Holyfield wouldn't be that big of an issue, because there's nothing at stake there, no belt," Jones said. "If there are millions involved, I'd think about it."

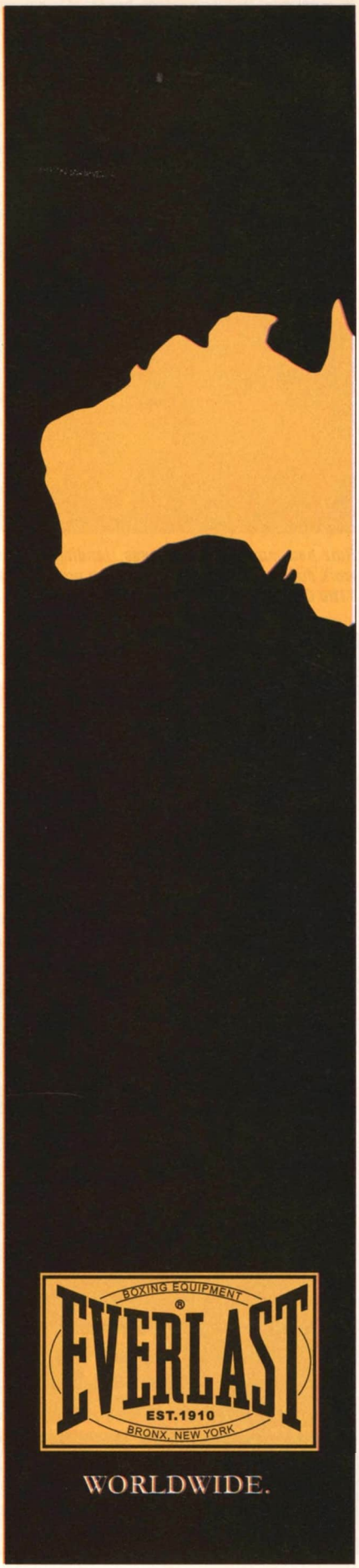
Even though Byrd beat Holyfield, Jones-Holyfield could turn out to be a bigger attraction than Jones-Byrd because of Holyfield's greater name recognition.

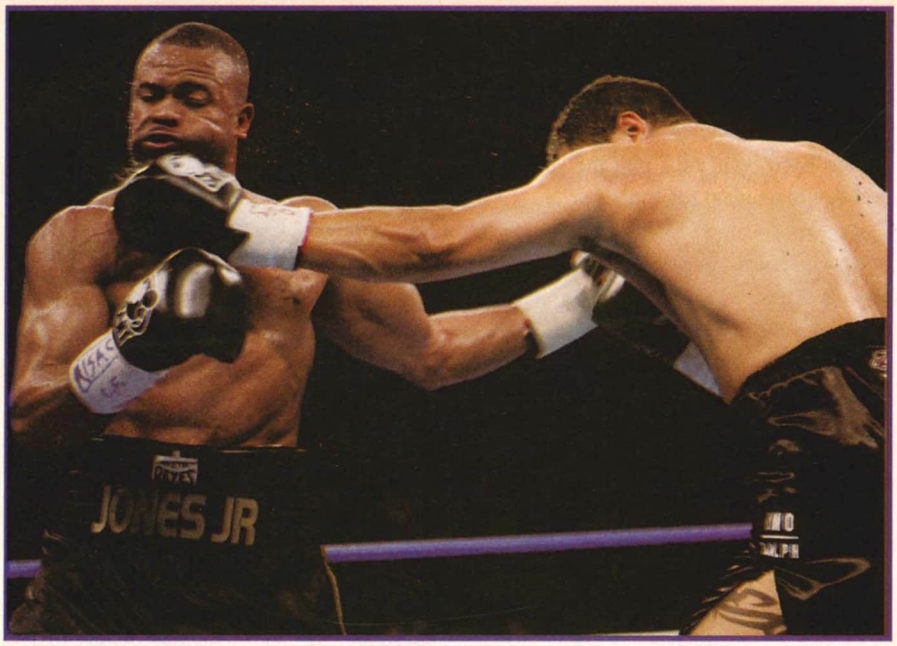
True, "The Real Deal" is obviously not the fighter he was five years ago, going 2-3-2 in his last seven bouts. But his third fight with Ruiz, an ugly 12-round draw in December '01, was the highest rated fight on HBO that year. And at 6'2" with a 77-inch reach, Holyfield, who weighed 220 for the Byrd bout, falls into the size range that would be ideal for Jones.

"I think it would be a better fight between Holyfield and Jones than Jones against Mike Tyson," Byrd said. "Holyfield can certainly trap you in certain areas, but he doesn't have the legs anymore. Roy still has good legs, and he can beat Evander. Holyfield can still punch, and he can still hurt people. Roy won't surprise Holyfield with his power, and I don't know if he could hurt Holyfield, but Roy can make him think."

Jones vs. Tyson: It has the potential to be the biggest fight in boxing history, possibly exceeding the staggering money Tyson's fight with Lewis generated in June '02. Lewis-Tyson was the largest grossing event in PPV history, producing $103-million from more than 1.8 million homes in

Jones catches Ruiz with a sizzling left as the bigger man attempts to get inside. From the very outset, the light heavyweight's hand speed stifled Ruiz' attack.





Ruiz had moments of success, landing a handful of hard jabs and occasionally getting some work done along the ropes when he pressed the attack. But Jones never had any difficulty taking "The Quiet Man's" punches, despite giving up 33 pounds.

the United States. (The highest selling event was the Holyfield-Tyson rematch in '97, which turned out 1.99 million buys).

Jones-Tyson could surpass those figures. Don't forget that mainstream sports fans are still stuck on Tyson, no matter how faded his skills are, and when you couple that with Jones' new credibility at heavyweight, anything is possible.

"It's never easy to predict what Roy Jones will do," said HBO blow-by-blow man Jim Lampley. "What would happen if Jones did fight Tyson? It would legitimize Roy to the public. The first five rounds of Jones-Tyson would be breathtaking.

"If Roy gets by the first five rounds, Mike would change and get desperate. Mike is a much bigger hitter and has much faster hands than John Ruiz. The general expectation is that Roy would find a way to deflate Mike."

Tyson's choices for a mega-payday

ROY MAKES RUIZ RELUCTANT

As Roy Jones was packing mounds of new muscle on his frame in preparation for his fight with John Ruiz, the big concern was that he might lose some of his amazing speed. But within moments of the opening bell, Jones made everyone aware that his deadly speed had not diminished by bulking up to 193 pounds.

While many expected Jones to run and hide, he didn't. He made Ruiz miss at close quarters and used his legs just enough to give his foe angles. The fight was fought in short flurries with long lulls in between punches. Both fighters looked for the big punch, but Jones connected with far more significant shots.

After getting cornered in the opening round, Jones settled into a rhythm of landing jabs, uppercuts, and straight rights that made the 226-pound Ruiz tentative throughout most of the fight.

The fourth proved to be one of the more decisive rounds in the bout. When Ruiz tried some roughhouse tactics by crowding Jones in a corner, Jones countered with a straight right to the face that broke Ruiz' nose and sent blood pouring out.

"People doubted that I'd even get in the ring with John Ruiz," said Jones, 48-1 (38), after the fight. "I wasn't ever hurt by his punches, but they were pretty hard. I was very sure I'd win this fight."

Jones was awarded a unanimous decision by scores of 117-111 (Duane Ford), 116-112 (Jerry Roth), and 118-110 (Stan Christodoulou). THE RING had the same score as Christodoulou.

"We wanted to focus on never letting Ruiz get set," said Mackie Shilstone, Jones' conditioning coach. "Ruiz just made a major tactical error after the first round and stopped punching. We sensed that Ruiz' corner would start panicking, and we saw that on film that they would start panicking once Ruiz got in trouble."

Jones lures Ruiz into a left

A solemn Ruiz, 38-5-1 (27), skipped the postfight press conference and sat in his locker room reluctant to give Jones any credit, instead blaming referee Jay Nady (USA) for the defeat.

"I just couldn't get off," Ruiz told HBO analyst Larry Merchant. "I don't know what rules [Nady] was following, and it was like I was fighting two guys in the ring. I didn't even get time to punch out of clinches."

Although Nady was, as usual, overly officious, it seemed to be Jones' counters and movement, more than anything the ref did, that prevented Ruiz from letting his hands go.

Promoter: Don King Promotions

(3-1-03)

—JS

Many believed Jones wouldn't have the power to hurt Ruiz, but a fourth-round assault that saw the defending beltholder staggered and his nose bloodied proved otherwise.

could come down to either Jones or another beating from Lewis, and Tyson's comments after he kayoed Cliff Etienne made it clear he doesn't want Lewis again in the immediate future. But a fight with Jones could revive Tyson's sagging career, just because it's a big fight that Iron Mike might actually win.

Even so, Foreman sees Jones handling Tyson pretty much the same way he did Ruiz, using a mix of shifty defense and improvisational riffs of fast-handed combinations. Jones won't face any height disparity, since Tyson and Jones are both listed at 5'11", nor does Tyson hold a great advantage with his 78-inch reach, in comparison to Jones' 74-inch reach.

Tyson, who came in at 225 3/4 pounds for his 49-second demolition of Etienne in February, showed he still has concussive, one-punch knockout power—though to some, that won't matter against Jones.

"I think Roy can solve Mike Tyson easily," Foreman said. "Tyson will start catching a few shots, and he's a frontrunner. Tyson couldn't catch Lennox in the first seven rounds, so do you think he'd be able to catch someone like Roy Jones? He wouldn't be able to put a glove on Roy Jones, and he'd probably start kicking and biting, and maybe even throw a stool or something."

Jones vs. Lewis: There were a number of grave misconceptions perpetuated after Jones' victory over Ruiz. The most flagrant was a number of media outlets proclaiming Jones as "the new heavyweight champion."

Let's get something straight: Lewis *is* the world heavyweight champion, and might be the only fighter in the world favored to beat Jones right now. At 6'5," Lewis is a good half-foot taller than Jones, and is about 50 pounds heavier. In addition, Lewis is a skilled fighter, capable of keeping Jones at a distance with his powerful jab and 84-inch reach.

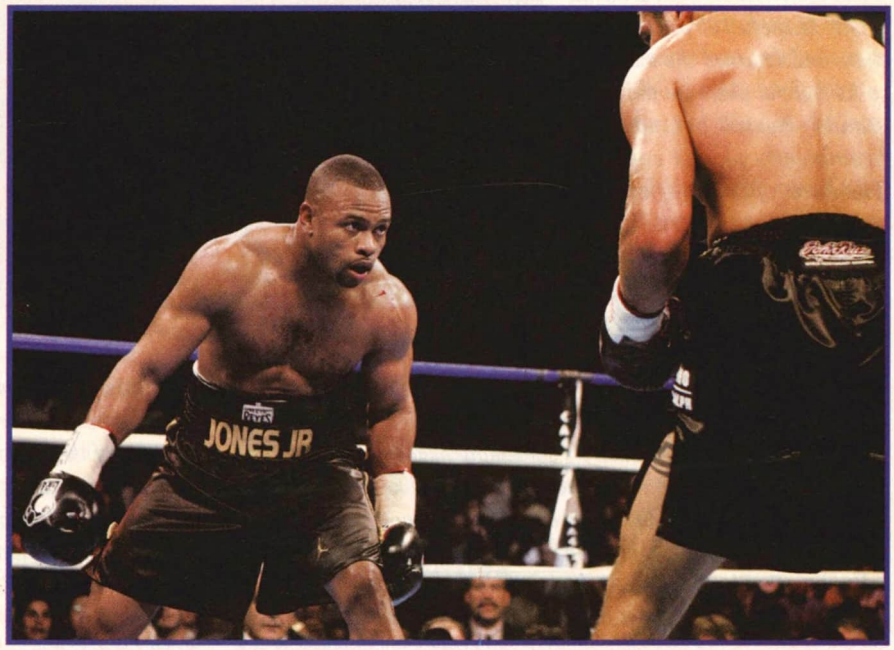
"Roy Jones is a worthy heavyweight," Lewis said after the Jones-Ruiz fight. "I was very impressed with the way he handled himself. Whether he can do that against me is another matter entirely."

Jones presents a few problem areas for Lewis. For one, the champ has never faced a fighter with the exceptional hand speed that Jones possesses. A second advantage is Jones' exceptional defensive abilities.

"Roy would have a for-real opponent in Lennox," Byrd said. "He won't sit there and punch with Lennox. Roy and Lennox are two guys who will make each other think, and that's a style matchup that's not good for Roy."

A whole new vista has opened up for Jones, one that includes both big risks and big rewards. Still, a vestige of the old Reluctant Roy remained after the Ruiz triumph. Immediately after the fight, Jones said, "I didn't do this to become a legitimate heavyweight."

Don't look now Roy, but you already are. ■



Jones, using his trademark unconventional defense, was always difficult for Ruiz to find with his punches. Whether other heavyweights such as Mike Tyson or Lennox Lewis would have greater success landing against Jones remains to be seen.

Our Exclusive Annual Report

THE STATE OF THE GAME

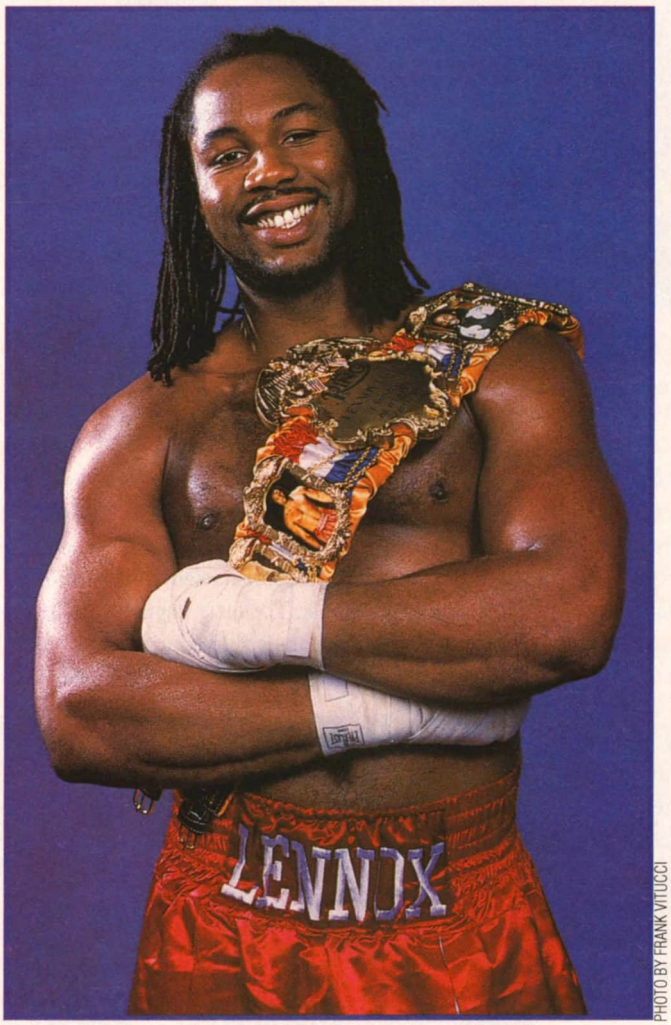


PHOTO BY FRANK VITUCCI

Lennox Lewis

By Eric Raskin

If you happened to pick up the March 10, 2003, issue of ***Sports Illustrated****, your jaw probably dropped when you saw that the word "Boxing" made its way onto the cover. Then your jaw returned to its natural position when you noticed the words "The Hell With" tacked on the front. Hopefully, you stopped there and returned the magazine to its rightful place on the newsstands—buried behind a few prominently placed copies of* ***THE RING****, of course—because if you'd opened the issue up and read on, you'd have found a thoroughly one-sided, somewhat out-of-touch article written by a guy (a former* ***KO*** *magazine columnist, no less!) who doesn't seem to like the sport of boxing, employed by a magazine that only covers the fight game when it absolutely has to or when there's something negative to say. Could you imagine* ***SI*** *hiring a golf writer who doesn't like golf or a baseball writer who doesn't like baseball? Of course not.*

Here at ***THE RING****, you get the other perspective—from writers who actually like boxing and want to see the sport survive and get excited about the big fights and know better than to call the talent pool "shallow." As has been pointed out many times before, if you combined all the boxers out there into the original eight divisions, you'd see that there's an overflow of talent comparable to nearly any other era in boxing. Maybe that talent is less American-heavy than it used to be. But isn't the same true of basketball, baseball, and nearly every other major sport?*

If boxing is dying, then how is it possible that just last June the sport produced the most financially successful fight in history? How did Oscar De La Hoya-Fernando Vargas, Roy Jones-John Ruiz, and Erik Morales-Paulie Ayala all exceed pay-per-view expectations? How is it that we are bearing witness to a fighter—Jones—whom some experts are calling the greatest of all-time? None of that sounds like a sport we should say, "The hell with."

On the following pages, we point out the good, the bad, and everything in between, going in depth in a way the mainstream media can't. As the title suggests, we look at the state of the game—from the point of view of those who actually care about the game's state.

One note: In each division, we name a fighter who "Deserves A Title Shot." What this means in a given division depends upon whether there's a ***RING*** *champ. If there is, then we've named the man most deserving of a crack at that champ. If not, then we've named a non-beltholder worthy of a shot at an alphabet title.*

Now if only some people in positions of power would give boxing the shot it deserves.

HEAVYWEIGHTS

When the heavyweight division is interesting, boxing is interesting, and right now, the heavyweight division is pretty darned interesting—no thanks to **Lennox Lewis**. While the world champion has been sitting around doing nothing but watching his dreadlocks turn gray, there have been major fights taking place all around him. Thank goodness. Somebody had to make a move, because Lewis, since dispatching of **Mike Tyson** in the highest-grossing fight of all-time last year, has been selfishly sitting on the throne reading the newspaper, almost oblivious to the lengthy line of contenders waiting outside the stall.

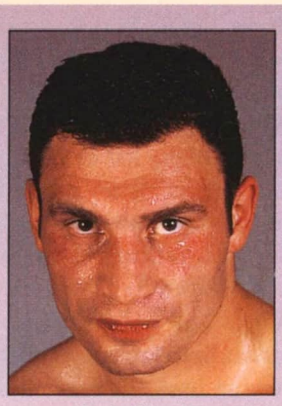
Here's some of what's happened since June 8, 2002: **Wladimir Klitschko** dominated **Jameel McCline**, then got dominated himself in a shocking upset loss to **Corrie Sanders**. **Chris Byrd** outboxed **Evander Holyfield**. **David Tua** obliterated **Michael Moorer**. **John Ruiz**, in his own ugly way, did us all a favor and bumped off **Kirk Johnson**. And of course, **Roy Jones** then did us an even bigger favor and whipped Ruiz, hopefully ending the 15 minutes of fame of the man who puts the "ass" in Massachusetts, Norman Stone.

Jones, incredibly, after years of pissing off fans and pissing on the sport of boxing every time he had a chance to lift it up, has finally delivered on his potential. At just under 200 pounds, the undisputed light heavyweight champ has injected new life into the heavyweight division. But whether he'll stick around—favoring his legacy over his safety has never been Jones' m.o.—remains to be seen.

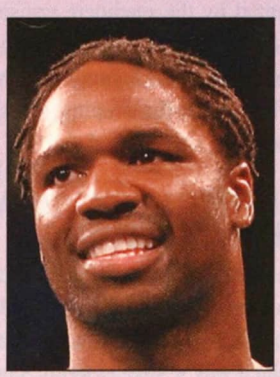
If he doesn't, there's always Tyson to make things interesting. In one week in February, Iron Mike made more headlines than Lennox could in a year. Tyson got a bad-ass tattoo on his face, somehow turned his ho-hum matchup with **Clifford Etienne** into a must-see event, and then crushed Etienne in 49 seconds—with a broken back, no less. (At least that's what Tyson said during his latest outrageously entertaining postfight rant.)

Who will Lewis fight next? When will Lewis fight next? It's anybody's guess. Maybe **Vitali Klitschko**, maybe Tyson, maybe nobody. It's a lame approach for the world heavyweight champion to take. Luckily, there's plenty going on in boxing's glamour division to tide us over until he gets his act together.

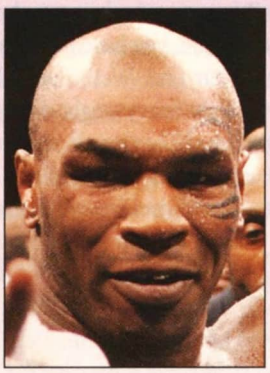
Think About It: While there is serious interest in the heavyweight division right now, there might not be for long. Has anyone noticed how old every fighter who matters is (especially now that 27-year-old Wladimir Klitschko has been bumped off)? Other than Klitschko, there isn't a top-12 contender under 30. Holyfield is 40, Lewis and Sanders are 37, Tyson's 36, Jones is 34, Byrd and McCline are 32, Ruiz and Vitali Klitschko are 31, and Tua, Johnson, **Hasim Rahman**, and **Fres Oquendo** are all 30.



Vitaly Klitschko



Chris Byrd



Mike Tyson

HEAVYWEIGHT

Best Puncher
Lennox Lewis

Best Boxer
Chris Byrd

Most Protected
George Kandelaki

Is He Still Around?
Tony Tubbs

Matchmaker's Dream
Roy Jones-Mike Tyson

Deserves A Title Shot
Chris Byrd

Most Fun To Watch
Mike Tyson

On The Way Down
John Ruiz

Underrated
Robert Wiggins

Overrated
Faruq Saleem

Best Fight In 2002
Clifford Etienne D 10
Frans Botha

CRUISERWEIGHTS

"Cruiserweight superfight" is a phrase about as oxymoronic as "jumbo shrimp" or "Macho Camacho." How can you have a superfight in a division as consistently un-super as cruiserweight? You can't. You need superstars to make superfights, and the closest this 23-year-old division has ever come to having a superstar was when it was ruled by soon-to-be superstar Evander Holyfield in the late-'80s.

And yet, right around the time this magazine will be hitting the newsstands, the cruiserweight division will be presenting to us a boxing match that some have dared to call a superfight. Probably, those who have done so are using the term too loosely. But still, **Vassiliy Jirov** vs. **James Toney**—the first ever cruiserweight HBO main event—is a damned attractive fight pairing two talented pugilists with whom even most casual boxing fans are familiar. And even if Jirov-Toney isn't a superfight, it may well spawn

CRUISERWEIGHT

Best Puncher
Vassiliy Jirov

Best Boxer
James Toney

Most Protected
Carlos Cruzat

Is He Still Around?
Donnie Lalonde

Matchmaker's Dream
Vassiliy Jirov-James Toney

Deserves A Title Shot
Guillermo Jones

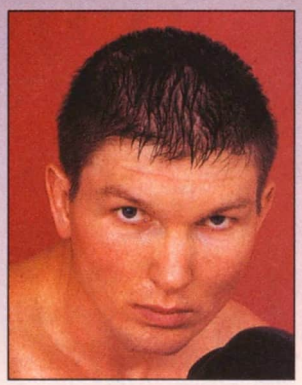
Most Fun To Watch
Ezra Sellers

On The Way Down
Johnny Nelson

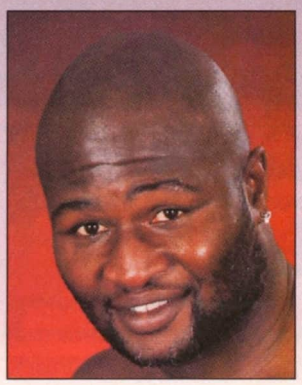
Underrated
Jean-Marc Mormeck

Overrated
Louis Azille

Best Fight In 2002
Rich LaMontagne KO 11
Michael Bennett



Vassiliy Jirov



James Toney

one: If it's a close and sensational fight, a rematch could be huge; on the other hand, if it's a one-sided bout, a meeting with Roy Jones might await for the winner.

Unfortunately, there's not a whole lot of depth these days (not that there ever was) in the 190-pound division. Jirov and Toney are really the only name fighters at this weight, as the rest of the top tier is made up of relatively unknown and/or unimpressive foreigners.

Frenchman **Jean-Marc Mormeck** owns an alphabet belt and stoppage wins over **Virgil Hill**, **Dale Brown**, and **Alexander Gurov**, and with Don King now behind him, he's starting to get that all-important American exposure. But it'll take some serious doing to get HBO's interest. Guyana's **Wayne Braithwaite**, who holds another alphabet belt, is an entertaining fighter, but you get the sense watching him that he could get separated from his senses and his undefeated record at any moment. Like Mormeck, he's strong, but a bit raw. Brit **Johnny Nelson** has been a mainstay near the top of the cruiser rankings for more than four years now, but the 36-year-old is obviously on his last legs after squeaking out a highly unpopular decision in his last fight. And Panama's **Guillermo Jones**, the guy who got ripped off against Nelson, gives every indication of never being able to take that next step.

Think About It: Like the heavyweight division, cruiserweight harbors a disproportional number of over-the-hill retreads. While Toney is doing more than just hanging on to the last scraps of his once-noteworthy career, there's a long list of veterans who aren't doing any more than that. **Donny Lalonde**, **Kenny Keene**, **Arthur Williams**, **Uriah Grant**, and **Joey DeGrandis** all were respectable fighters in their prime who keep coming back (or never went away) because of the hope presented by the mediocre cruiserweight division. Let's pray that the once-great Tommy Hearns, who's been threatening to join the party, stays retired.

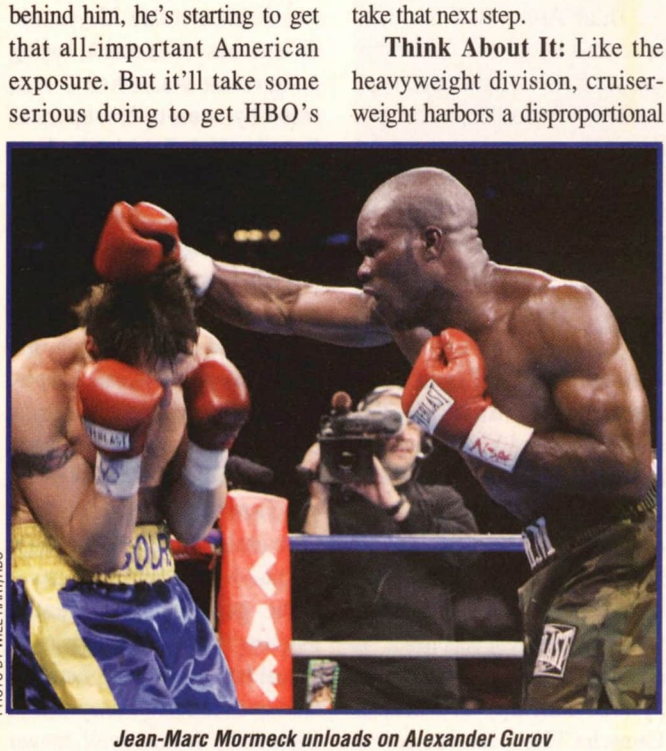


PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Jean-Marc Mormeck unloads on Alexander Gurov

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS

It must be tough for fighters to stand around waiting for the decision when they're not sure which way it's going to go. Your whole career, your whole future, it all hangs in the balance. And, at that point, you have no control over your fate. Well, that's the entire light heavyweight division right now. They're all standing around waiting for a decision—**Roy Jones'** decision on whether he intends to keep defending the 175-pound title.

Without knowing if Jones is going to be a part of the picture, you're looking at two drastically different light heavyweight divisions. The one with Jones has a superstar bringing money and prestige to the weight class—but also making it nearly impossible for anyone else to be champ. Most experts would agree that **Antonio Tarver** is clearly the greatest threat to Jones at this weight. But would you make Tarver much better than a 10-1 underdog? If Jones sticks around, it'll be the same old story at light heavy: one uninteresting title defense after another, with the same cast of characters continuing to jockey for the money fight and the right to lose to Jones.

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHT

Best Puncher
Roy Jones

Best Boxer
Roy Jones

Most Protected
Dariusz Michalczewski

Is He Still Around?
Troy Weaver

Matchmaker's Dream
Roy Jones-Bernard Hopkins

Deserves A Title Shot
Antonio Tarver

Most Fun To Watch
Julio Gonzalez

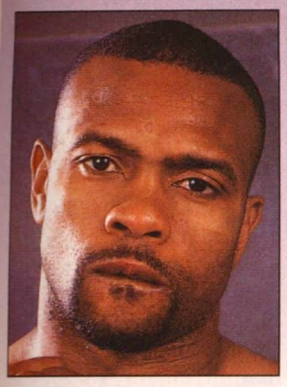
On The Way Down
Reggie Johnson

Underrated
Mehdi Sahnoune

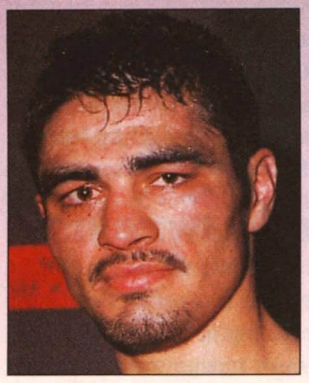
Overrated
Dariusz Michalczewski

Best Fight In 2002
Elvir Muriqi KO 3
Sammy Ahmad

If Jones does stay at heavyweight (or cruiserweight, for that matter), everything is reversed. The title picture is wide open, assorted deserving and undeserving fighters get shots at vacant alphabet belts, and **Dariusz Michalczewski** once again has a claim (albeit a flimsy one) to being the best. In a sense, that's good news for the fighters, but without Jones, will anyone even care? Frankly, when you subtract Jones, light heavyweight instantly becomes one of the least compelling divisions in the sport. Assuming Tarver beats **Montell Griffin**, a Tarver-Michalczewski fight might have some value. But beyond that, who is there? **Eric Harding**? **Mehdi Sahnoune**? **Clinton Woods**? Regardless of what the Jones worshippers will tell you, this was a lousy division that he feasted on for the last six years—and it'll



Roy Jones



Julio Gonzalez

only get worse without him.

Think About It: Very few fighters have seen their stars rise and fall as quickly as **Julian Letterlough's** did. He turned pro in '98 at age 28, and less than two years later, he became a sensation by running his record to 14-0 (14) in a magnificent slugfest with **Demetrius Jenkins**. The next 14 months were very fruitful, as he warred with **Julio Gonzalez** in a top Fight of the Year candidate and got a shot at a major cruiserweight title against Vassiliy Jirov. But in '02, the high-speed plunge was on, with a loss to **David Telesco** and, most recently, a six-round draw with some 2-8-2 nobody named **John Douglas**. "Mr. KO," we hardly knew ya'.

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS

For a lousy division, super middleweight ain't half bad. We've all been ripping the lack of talent at 168 pounds for years—pretty much since Roy Jones' departure in '96—but this crew has quietly risen from lousy to mediocre, and now presents the fans with some interesting possibilities.

Part of what's made this division slowly respectable is the consistency at the top from WBO beltholder **Joe Calzaghe** and IBF titlist **Sven Ottke**. While they both look pretty ordinary and beatable most of the time, neither one's been beaten yet, and when you remain undefeated and hold your title long enough, you eventually become a "name" fighter even if there's nothing all that special about your abilities. Calzaghe's an arm-puncher who's rough around just about every edge; Ottke barely punches at all, preferring to win with a tight defense and the knowledge that a boring round in which very little happens will invariably go to him in Germany. Yet both are now established names despite their shortcomings.

Canadian **Eric Lucas** is on his way to joining the Welshman and the German as an established name despite his own all-around ordinariness, having reg-

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHT

Best Puncher
Antwun Echols

Best Boxer
Sven Ottke

Most Protected
Freeman Barr

Is He Still Around?
Julio Cesar Vasquez

Matchmaker's Dream
Joe Calzaghe-Antwun Echols

Deserves A Title Shot
Antwun Echols

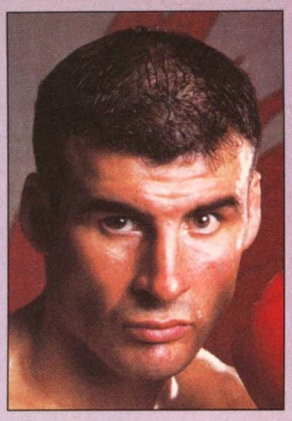
Most Fun To Watch
Charles Brewer

On The Way Down
Dingaan Thobela

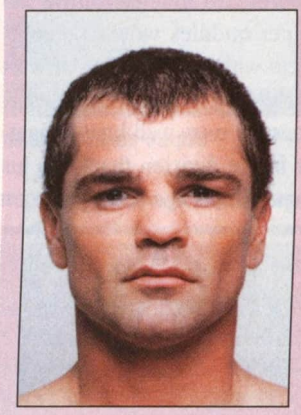
Underrated
Syd Vanderpool

Overrated
Jeff Lacy

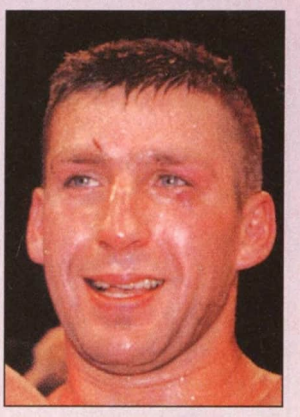
Best Fight In 2002
Charles Brewer KO 6 Scott Pemberton



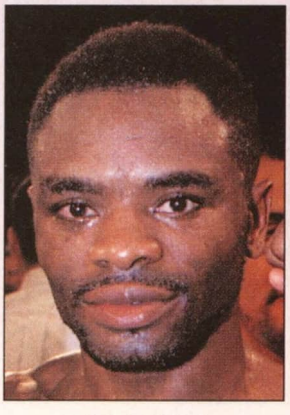
Joe Calzaghe



Sven Ottke



Eric Lucas



Antwun Echols

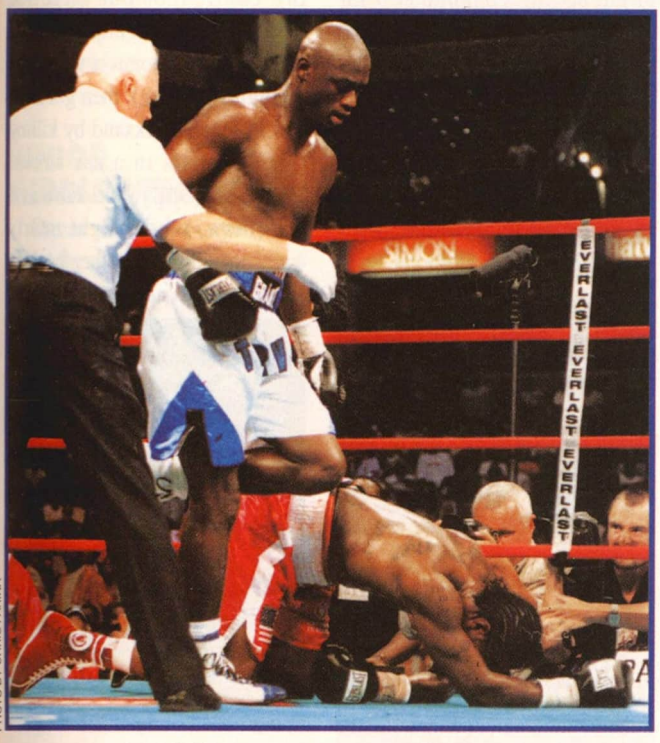


PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

Antonio Tarver gets revenge on Eric Harding

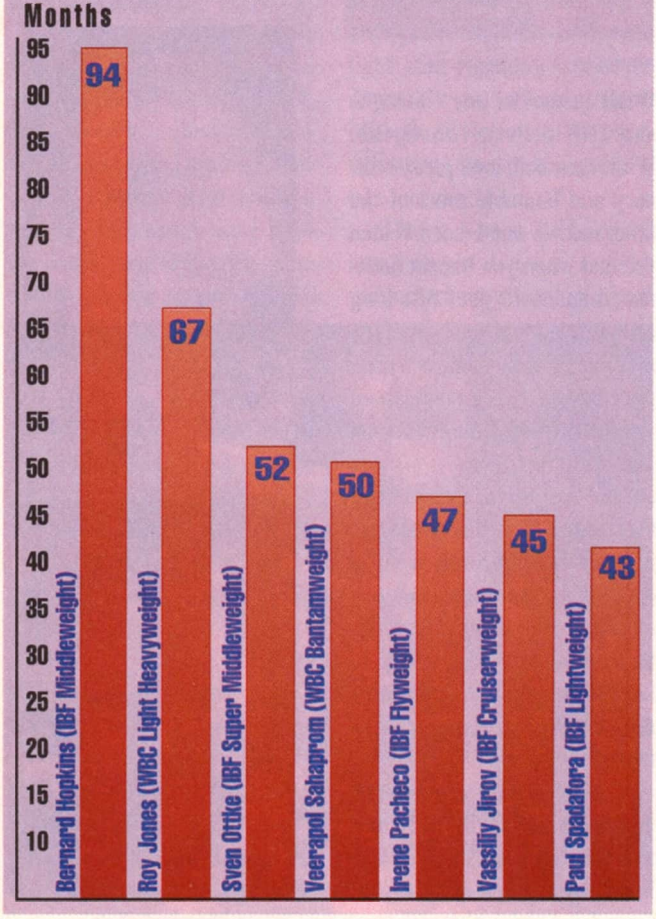
istered three defenses of the WBC belt as of press time, including an impressive one last time out against **Omar Sheika.** As for underexposed WBA beltholder **Byron Mitchell**, he lacks the consistency of Ottke, Calzaghe, and Lucas, but he does have serious punching power—which might have carried him to an upset win in his unification bout with Ottke by the time you read this.

And speaking of punching power, no discussion of the super middles would be complete without a look at **Antwun "Kid Dynamite" Echols**, perhaps the most well-known fighter in the division thanks to his many bouts over the years on USA, ESPN2, and Showtime, not to mention his two tough fights with middleweight champ Bernard Hopkins, one of which was on HBO. Bouts against Calzaghe or the Ottke-Mitchell winner are possibilities for Echols, and are the sort of fights that could make the much-maligned 168-pounders matter for the first time in seven years.

Think About It: As of press time, Ottke had made 16 consecutive successful defenses of his belt, making him the leader among reigning titleholders (by a margin of one over Hopkins). Perhaps the most incredible thing about Ottke's reign is his remarkable consistency of activity. Since winning the title in October '98 (42 months after Hopkins won his), he's fought exactly four times in each calendar year, and he has never let four full months go by between defenses.

LONGEST-REIGNING CHAMPIONS

The graph below illustrates the game's most established titlists, along with the number of consecutive months each has held the title. The list hasn't changed much since last year, with the only removals being those of Tim Austin, who was defeated by Rafael Marquez, and Floyd Mayweather, who abdicated the junior lightweight throne to move up to 135 pounds.



MIDDLEWEIGHTS

In 2001, the middleweight division was perhaps the most appealing in boxing, with Don King's championship tournament returning the 160-pounders to its traditional position as a "glamour" division. In 2002, as the accompanying sidebar indicates, the best fight in the division was **Robert Allen's** mildly entertaining decision win over **Dwain "Tiger" Williams**. So much for the glamorous middleweight division.

That's what happens when a division has only two star fighters, and one of them vanishes, while the other one retires. Undisputed champion **Bernard Hopkins** fought second-rate mandatory challenger **Carl Daniels** in February, then sat on his championship for the rest of the year, negotiating his way out of big fights and alienating many in the boxing community with his words and his deeds. Felix Trinidad also fought just once, against used-up **Hassine Cherifi** in May, and then quit the sport when he couldn't secure a rematch with Hopkins.

To be perfectly blunt, with Trinidad gone and Hopkins barely active, this division is lousy. **Harry Simon**, the only interesting challenger out there for Hopkins, also fought just once in '02 (a solid decision win over **Armand Krajnc**), then got himself in legal quicksand by killing three tourists in a car wreck. **William Joppy** and **Howard Eastman**, who fought nearly even-up with each other back in

MIDDLEWEIGHT

Best Puncher
Bernard Hopkins

Best Boxer
Bernard Hopkins

Most Protected
Erland Betare

Is He Still Around?
Hector Camacho Sr.

Matchmaker's Dream
Bernard Hopkins-Oscar De La Hoya

Deserves A Title Shot
William Joppy

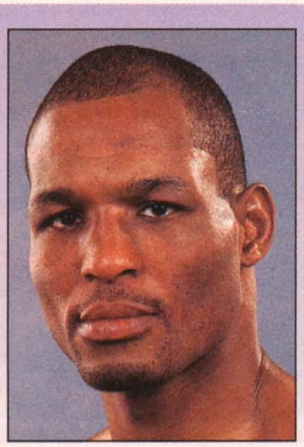
Most Fun To Watch
Bernard Hopkins

On The Way Down
Brian Barbosa

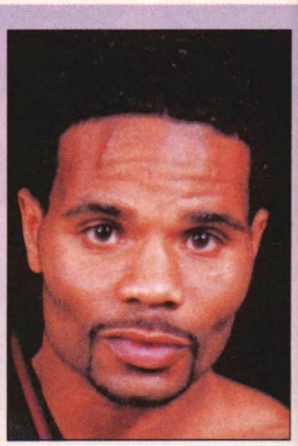
Underrated
Wayne Alexander

Overrated
Maselino Masoe

Best Fight In 2002
Robert Allen W 12
Dwain Williams



Bernard Hopkins



William Joppy

'01 and have both done virtually nothing since, are solid contenders, but not even minor threats to Hopkins. Beyond that, the rankings are putrid. Robert Allen has already been destroyed by Hopkins. **Tito Mendoza** chumped out and lost to Allen. Cherifi has no business being in the top 10, yet there he is at number seven because the division is so pitifully shallow.

Thankfully, Oscar De La Hoya may be coming up from junior middle to challenge Hopkins eventually. But until then, you're probably going to have to pop in your Hopkins-Trinidad tape if you want to be entertained by the 160-pounders.

Think About It: In another one of our annual special sections, "THE RING 100," there isn't a single fighter who's been included every year since the feature's inception in 1996 *and* has seen his ranking rise every year. But Hopkins comes darned close. He started at number 20 in '96, then rose to 16 in '97, hit 10 in '98, took a slight dip to 12 in '99, climbed to number eight in '00, reached seven in '01, and landed at number one in '02. Too bad for "The Executioner" there's nowhere to go but down now.

JUNIOR MIDDLEWEIGHTS

Oscar De La Hoya promised us several years ago that he would be retired from boxing by the time he turned 30. Well, "The Golden Boy" hit the big three-oh this past February, and he's still here. Thank goodness Oscar isn't a man of his word.

Boxing needs De La Hoya, and the junior middleweight division *really* needs him, as he single-handedly makes it one of the most attractive weight classes in the sport. With his career-defining win over **Fernando Vargas** last September helping him reach new heights of popularity, he could probably fight a rematch with Patrick Charpentier now and sell out 90,000 seats instead of just 45,000.

Thankfully, De La Hoya does intend to take a real fight later this year, even though the early sales for his May mismatch with **Yory Boy Campas** suggest that he doesn't have to. That real fight, however, looks like it might not come against **Sugar Shane Mosley**, Oscar's only active conqueror. Mosley, a recent graduate of the Bernard Hopkins School of Negotiation, turned down a $4.25-million offer to face De La Hoya and was continuing to rebuff incentive-laden offers as we went to press.

That would leave Vargas as the leading candidate for a rematch with The Golden Boy, but "El Feroz" seems determined to take a slower, safer recovery route rather than jump at the money. One guy who definitely isn't getting the fall 2003 shot at De La Hoya is his true number-one contender, **Winky Wright**. Bob Arum would rather see his wife leave him for Don King than put his star attraction in with the hard-to-sell southpaw.

As for rest of the junior middles, **Javier Castillejo** and **Bronco McKart** have already had their limitations exposed, while **Daniel Santos** and **Kassim Ouma** very well might as soon as they step up. Two guys to keep an eye on are **Tokunbo Olajide**, who still has a high potential upside despite his loss to **Epifanio Mendoza**, and **Alex Garcia**, who blew out respected **Santiago Samaniego** in March.

Think About It: Some call De La Hoya a four-division champ, some call him a five-division champ, but was he ever really a champ at all before moving up to junior middleweight?

Oscar De La Hoya's hook shakes Fernando Vargas

JUNIOR MIDDLEWEIGHT

Best Puncher
Oscar De La Hoya

Best Boxer
Oscar De La Hoya

Most Protected
Rhoshii Wells

Is He Still Around?
Wilfredo Rivera

Matchmaker's Dream
Oscar De La Hoya-Shane Mosley II

Deserves A Title Shot
Winky Wright

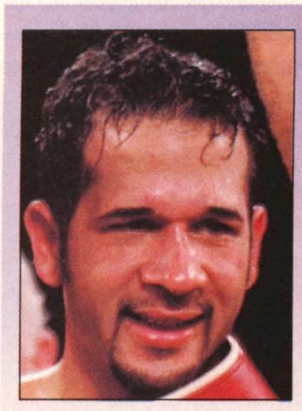
Most Fun To Watch
Fernando Vargas

On The Way Down
Shibata Flores

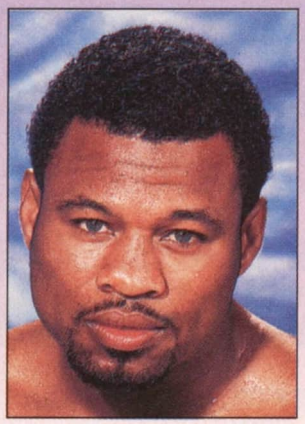
Underrated
Verno Phillips

Overrated
Daniel Santos

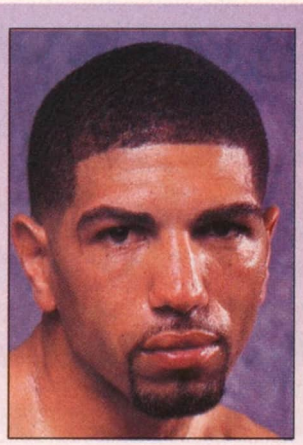
Best Fight In 2002
Oscar De La Hoya KO 11 Fernando Vargas



Daniel Santos



Shane Mosley



Winky Wright

Had THE RING's championship policy been in place throughout his career, Oscar probably never would have been awarded one of our titles.

At lightweight, De La Hoya and Rafael Ruelas were rated numbers two and three behind Miguel Angel Gonzalez when they fought in '95, so we couldn't have recognized the winner as the world champion. At junior welter, Julio Cesar Chavez was rated third when fourth-rated Oscar beat him, and Gonzalez was fifth when De La Hoya defeated him next. At 147 pounds, Pernell Whitaker was rated number one, but De La Hoya was unrated at the weight because he hadn't fought there yet. When De La Hoya fought Ike Quartey two years later, it was number one vs. number three, but with Felix Trinidad in between them, it's unlikely that THE RING would have "sanctioned" the bout. De La Hoya-Trinidad later in the year certainly would have been a title bout—but, of course, Oscar came out on the losing end in that one.

WELTERWEIGHTS

One second Shane Mosley is upsetting Oscar De La Hoya to change the landscape at 147 pounds. The next second, Mosley's getting dominated by 7-1 underdog **Vernon Forrest**. And before you have time to catch your breath, Forrest's getting whacked out by 6-1 'dog **Ricardo Mayorga**. The bottom line is this: Don't even bother trying to get comfortable with the idea of Mayorga as the world's best welterweight, because by the time it starts to feel right, some guy you never thought had a chance will have smoked him.

If you're hoping "El Matador" stays on top for a while, though, you're not alone. Mayorga is a cross between "Stone-Cold" Steve Austin (the beer drinking and the attitude), Slammin' Sammy Sosa (the power and the Latino charm), and Arturo Gatti (the toughness and the exciting fighting style). What's not to like?

Unfortunately, it's a combination that usually doesn't go hand-in-hand with longevity. In fact, a lot of people believe Forrest will even the score just by boxing smarter in the rematch that looks likely to happen before the end of the year. Forrest wasn't the 2002 Fighter of the Year for nothing, after all. But at the same time, Mayorga didn't kick his butt by accident. Their first fight, though brief, was sensational, which is why the second go-round stands as one of the most appealing possible matches in the sport today.

There's one more name that must be thrown into the mix with Mayorga and Forrest, and that's **Antonio Margarito**. All three losses on the 25-year-old Mexican's record came before he turned 19, and he's since gone 20 fights without a defeat. His knockouts of **Antonio Diaz** and **Andrew "Six Heads" Lewis** have forced the boxing world to take notice that this slow starter happens to be a great finisher.

After the top three, unfortunately, there's a steep drop-off in this division that not long ago was the best in boxing. Whoever wins the **Cory Spinks-Michele Piccirillo** rematch will have proven himself a worthy contender, but have you ever seen either of them in a fight that didn't make you want to change the channel in search of a bowling tournament or a bass-fishing competition? And Margarito victims Lewis and Diaz have both seen better days, although Diaz's competitive loss to Margarito a

WELTERWEIGHT

Best Puncher
Ricardo Mayorga

Best Boxer
Vernon Forrest

Most Protected
Thomas Damgaard

Is He Still Around?
Rafael Pineda

Matchmaker's Dream
Ricardo Mayorga-Vernon Forrest II

Deserves A Title Shot
Antonio Margarito

Most Fun To Watch
Ricardo Mayorga

On The Way Down
Andrew Lewis

Underrated
Antonio Diaz

Overrated
Michele Piccirillo

Best Fight In 2002
Antonio Margarito KO 10 Antonio Diaz

BOXING ON TV

*We're all excited about boxing returning to network TV in 2003, but one positive thing you have to say about the cable channels is that what they may lack in exposure and viewership, they make up for in sheer volume. In 2002, there were a whopping 197 televised boxing cards, up from 161 in '01, thanks mainly to a full year of **ShoBox** and increased commitment from the Spanish-language channels. A couple of clarifications on the networks listed below: "HBO PPV/SET" refers to a joint venture from the two pay-per-view giants (the Lennox Lewis-Mike Tyson fight), and "Other PPV" refers to any pay-per-view broadcasts that were not distributed by HBO PPV or SET.*

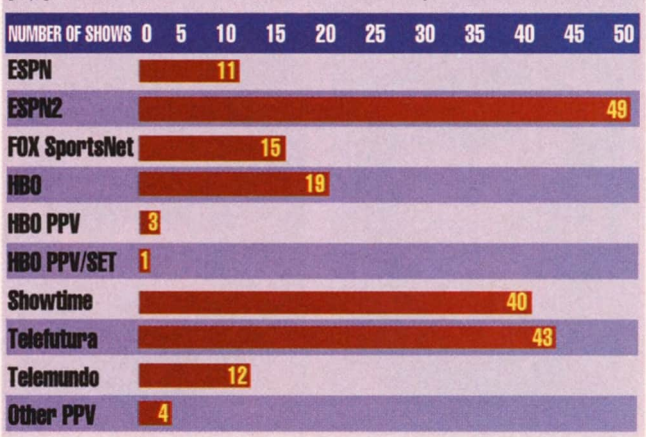


PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

Ricardo Mayorga takes the title from Vernon Forrest

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

Antonio Margarito moves in to finish Andrew Lewis

least shows that he still has *some* viability. The same can not be said of Six Heads.

Think About It: Of the 49 current world/alphabet titleholders in boxing, only one has at any point in his career scored back-to-back wins over undefeated reigning world/alphabet titlists: Mayorga. Add in the fact that they were both knockout wins within five rounds, and you have quite an impressive little stat.

JUNIOR WELTERWEIGHTS

Kostya Tszyu was overrated early in his career, underrated following his loss to **Vince Phillips**, and now, at age 33 and seemingly at his peak, perhaps both underrated and overrated. To some, his win over **Zab Judah** was a fluke, his victory over **Sharmba Mitchell** was made possible by a pre-existing injury to his opponent, and his struggles with **James Leija** and **Oktay Urkal** show the limitations of a fighter whose pound-for-pound status has been achieved without any wins over fellow pound-for-pounders. To others, his relentless power and pressure eventually overwhelm everyone—including Judah, Mitchell, Leija, and anyone else who might have artificial success against him for a few rounds—and his skill is shamefully overlooked because it's not accompanied by much pizzazz. Some say he's an all-time great. Some say he's a major upset waiting to happen.

But of this there's no debate: Tszyu is the undisputed champion of boxing's best and deepest division, and of the top 10 challengers in THE RING's ratings, he's already beaten six of them. That has to tell you something. He may not dominate each individual fight, but when you look at the big picture, he's been a dominant champion.

And what a field it is that he's dominating. The top contenders include Mitchell, who's bounced back well from his loss to Tszyu; Judah, who hasn't bounced back so well and needs to put his promotional woes aside and fight somebody; **Arturo Gatti**, who's as popular as ever after a phenomenal win over (and an even more phenomenal loss to) **Micky Ward**; **DeMarcus Corley**, who may have just the style to neutralize Tszyu; and **Vivian Harris**, whose blowout of **Diobelys Hurtado** reminded us how quickly the face of this division can change.

Beyond those five, there's nobody worth considering for a shot at the champ at the moment, but the fact remains that Ward, Urkal, Leija, Hurtado, **Ben Tackie**, **Omar Weis**, **Ricky Hatton**, **Junior Witter**, and **Randall Bailey** are as good a supporting cast as you'll find in any division. The matchups that could be made among the contenders are irresistible: Gatti vs. anyone; Mitchell vs. Corley in a D.C. turf war; Ward vs. Hatton in a bodypunching brawl; Judah vs. Harris; Hatton vs. Witter; Tackie vs. Bailey; Leija vs. Weis; and so on. If only every weight class could look like this.

Think About It: Not only is the 140-pound class scary with depth right now, but it's also absurdly overcrowded with blue-chip prospects. Check out this top-12 of up-and-comers who reside at junior welter: **Miguel Cotto**, **Muhammad Abdullaev**, **Francisco Bojado**, **Kelson Pinto**, **Ricardo Williams**, **Oscar Diaz**, **Ivan Kirpa**, **Fred Cadena**, **Jeffrey Resto**, **Dimitry Salita**, **Demetrius Hopkins**, and **Paul Malignaggi**. If the

JUNIOR WELTERWEIGHT

Best Puncher
Kostya Tszyu

Best Boxer
Sharmba Mitchell

Most Protected
Soulemane M'Baye

Is He Still Around?
Pedro Saiz

Matchmaker's Dream
Kostya Tszyu-Arturo Gatti

Deserves A Title Shot
Sharmba Mitchell

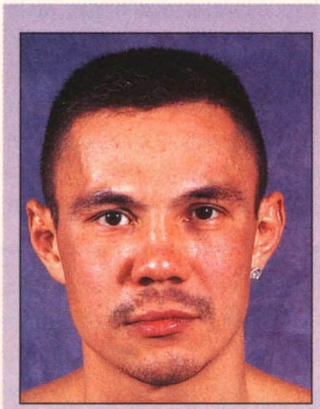
Most Fun To Watch
Arturo Gatti

On The Way Down
Jesse James Leija

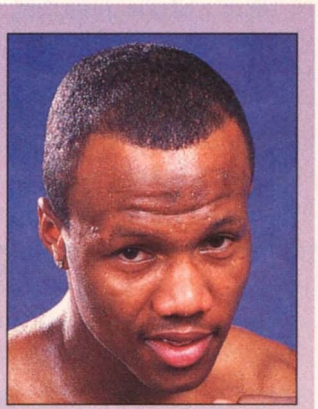
Underrated
Oktay Urkal

Overrated
Francisco Bojado

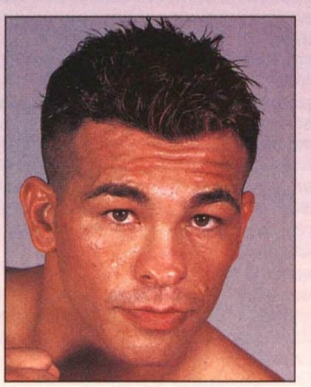
Best Fight In 2002
Micky Ward W 10
Arturo Gatti



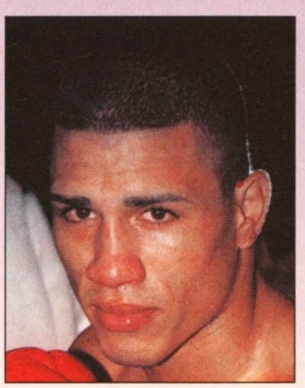
Kostya Tszyu



Zab Judah



Arturo Gatti



Miguel Cotto

mental maturity issues that some of them face can be overcome, the pound-for-pound ratings and the junior welterweight ratings might look almost identical a couple of years from now.

LIGHTWEIGHTS

Here's what we learned in watching 24 rounds of **Floyd Mayweather** vs. **Jose Luis Castillo**: Mayweather isn't much of a puncher at lightweight; the gap between "Pretty Boy Floyd" and his competition isn't as vast as it was at 130 pounds; Castillo's a heckuva solid contender; and being a heckuva solid contender isn't enough to earn you another title shot. After a rematch so boring it couldn't even steal the thunder from Wladimir Klitschko-Jameel McCline, we don't ever want to see Mayweather and Castillo share a ring again. But the good news is there are a handful of other lightweights we'd be curious to see challenge world champion Mayweather.

There's **Stevie Johnston**, who was basically Castillo's equal as of three years ago, and might still be—though it's hard to tell with "Li'l But Bad's" inconsistent fighting schedule. Regardless, his toughness, skill, experience, and southpaw style make him an intriguing opponent for Mayweather.

Paul Spadafora also has a tricky southpaw style, and if he emerges from his May 17 unification bout with **Leonard Dorin** with two belts, he'll have quite a bargaining chip for getting Mayweather in the ring. Likewise, if Dorin, an all-action pressure fighter with guts galore, defeats Spadafora, he becomes a perfect opponent for Mayweather.

Some feel **Juan Lazcano** is the most deserving contender in the division, although the truth may be that a busy schedule, an entertaining style, and a charming personality have combined to make people forget that "The Hispanic Causing Panic" has panicked opponents with a combined record of 110-63-10 in his last five fights, owns only one impressive win over a fellow contender (a faded John-John Molina), and received an absolute gift against Jesse James Leija. Nevertheless, he'd make for an attractive (though probably overmatched) opponent for Mayweather.

But the biggest fight of all at lightweight could come from a guy who is isn't even in the top 10 … yet. **Diego Corrales** is on the comeback trail, and despite the one-sided nature of his loss to Mayweather in '01, the ex-

LIGHTWEIGHT

Best Puncher
Jose Luis Castillo

Best Boxer
Floyd Mayweather

Most Protected
Artur Grigorian

Is He Still Around?
Regilio Tuur

Matchmaker's Dream
Floyd Mayweather-Diego Corrales II

Deserves A Title Shot
Steve Johnston

Most Fun To Watch
Leonard Dorin

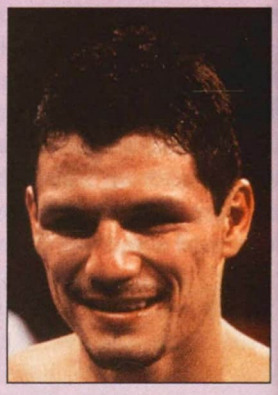
On The Way Down
Angel Manfredy

Underrated
Javier Jauregui

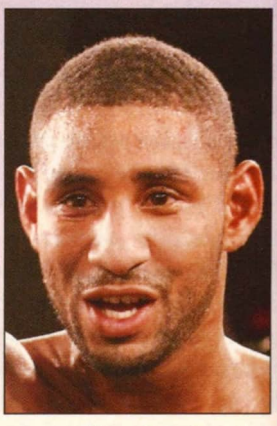
Overrated
Juan Lazcano

Best Fight In 2002
Leonard Dorin W 12
Raul Balbi (first fight)

Floyd Mayweather attacks Jose Luis Castillo in their rematch



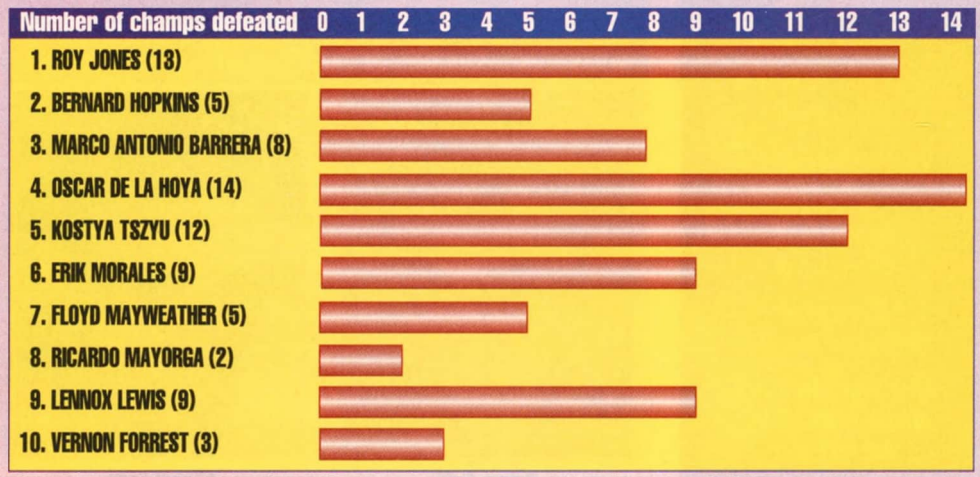
Juan Lazcano



Diego Corrales

TITLISTS vs. TITLISTS

One of several ways to calculate a fighter's worth is to count the number of champions or titlists he's defeated. Here's how ***THE RING'S*** *pound-for-pound top 10 stack up:*



con remains a compelling opponent with a storyline and a score to settle. "Chico" will have to demonstrate that he can still be the same destructive force he was during his 130-pound title reign, but if he can do that, Mayweather-Corrales II becomes the hottest fight at 135 pounds.

Think About It: Mayweather, Spadafora, and Dorin make lightweight the only division in which the WBC, WBA, and IBF titles are all held by undefeated fighters. Even WBO beltholder **Artur Grigorian** is undefeated, in fact. The four titlists boasted a combined record of 132-0 (63) as of press time, but that "0" will have to go when Spadafora and Dorin clash in May.

JUNIOR LIGHTWEIGHTS

It's expected that when a superstar leaves a division, he'll be missed. And to a certain extent, the 130-pound class misses Floyd Mayweather, who ruled the division magnificently for more than three years. But the guy we really miss is **Acelino "Popo" Freitas**. Remember the take-no-prisoners brawler with the explosive knockout power who had us all thinking we'd found a Rocky Graziano for the 21st century? What happened to that guy? And who's this guy who looks just like Freitas, but fights like Larry Donald?

Okay, so the Larry Donald comparison is a bit unfair. But Freitas has become a safety-first fighter who's traded wicked hooks and crushing overhand rights for precise jabs and nifty footwork. After winning his first 29 fights by knockout, Popo's next three all went the distance.

Still, he's the man to beat in this division, by a tiny margin over **Joel Casamayor**, whom he edged with the help of a couple of controversial calls back in January '02. Casamayor, in turn, eked out a razor-thin decision over the division's most exciting fighter (now that Freitas has taken the "pop" out of Popo), **Nate Campbell**—which all just goes to show you how tightly bunched the top 10 at junior lightweight are in Mayweather's absence.

Other guys who are in the mix: **Jesus Chavez**, the best and most proven fighter in the division never to hold a major belt; **Steve Forbes**, a slickster who's done well for himself in the ring, if not on the scale; and **Phillip Ndou**, a South African with a major buzz surrounding him as he seeks American exposure.

Proving that alphabet belts don't make fighters "champions," the titlists at 130 pounds are not the highest ranking guys. Thailanders **Yodsanan Nanthachai** and **Sirimongkol Singmanassak** are joined by El Salvador's **Carlos Hernandez** as the three beltholders. All are quality fighters, but none matter much in the big picture. What this division really needs is a rematch between Freitas and Casamayor, so a RING champion can be crowned. And if we're really lucky, not only will that fight get made, but the right version of Freitas will show up as well.

Think About It: Just how gross of a mismatch would the aborted Freitas-**Gabe Ruelas** fight have been? In the 4½ years since Ruelas got dominated and stopped in eight rounds by fringe contender John Brown, convincing everyone but Ruelas that it was time to retire, the former 130-pound titlist suffered a defeat to little-known Manuel Garnica, retired for 17 months, then came back and scored three decision wins against opponents with a combined record of 64-128-1. Hey, what do you say we throw him in with the hardest puncher in the division? And while we're at, let's put Rafael Ruelas on the card against David Tua.

JUNIOR LIGHTWEIGHT

Best Puncher
Acelino Freitas

Best Boxer
Joel Casamayor

Most Protected
Randy Suico

Is He Still Around?
Jorge Paez

Matchmaker's Dream
Acelino Freitas-
Joel Casamayor II

Deserves A Title Shot
Jesus Chavez

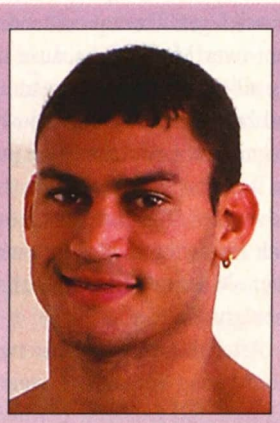
Most Fun To Watch
Nate Campbell

On The Way Down
Mbulelo Botile

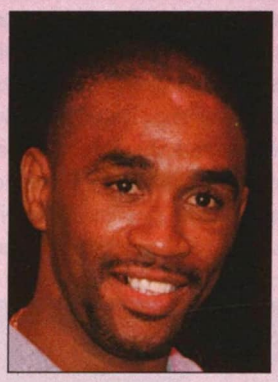
Underrated
Gary St. Clair

Overrated
Jorge Barrios

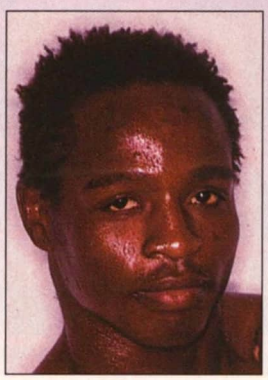
Best Fight In 2002
Acelino Freitas W 12
Joel Casamayor



Acelino Freitas



Joel Casamayor



Phillip Ndou

FEATHERWEIGHTS

We're going to go out on a limb here and assume that **Kevin Kelley** will not be the world

FEATHERWEIGHT

Best Puncher
Naseem Hamed

Best Boxer
Marco Antonio Barrera

Most Protected
Nicky Cook

Is He Still Around?
Vuyani Bungu

Matchmaker's Dream
Marco Antonio Barrera-
Erik Morales III

Deserves A Title Shot
Erik Morales

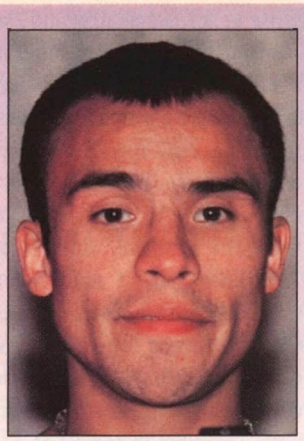
Most Fun To Watch
Erik Morales

On The Way Down
Bones Adams

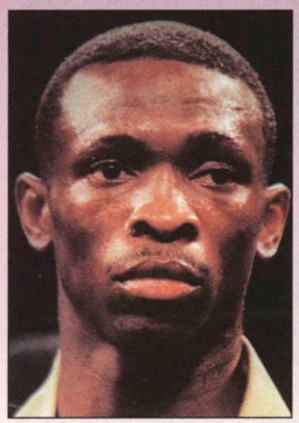
Underrated
Zahir Raheem

Overrated
Daniel Seda

Best Fight In 2002
Lehlo Ledwaba W 12
Vuyani Bungu



Juan Manuel Marquez



Derrick Gainer

featherweight champion by the time you read this. Unless **Marco Antonio Barrera** shows up for the fight with one arm in a sling and the other one amputated, he will still be the reigning king, and this will still be one of boxing's most appealing divisions.

At the top, you have the Mexican triumvirate of Barrera, **Erik Morales**, and **Juan Manuel Marquez**, all strong, experienced, highly skilled guys under the age of 30, all with exciting styles (some more consistently than others). It's hard to know for sure how they stack up because Marquez hasn't had a chance to tangle with either of the others, while Barrera and Morales have tangled twice with inconclusive results. But at this point, Barrera is the champion by virtue of his razor-thin points win over Morales last June. And Morales gets the top contender spot over Marquez because of his all-around superior resume and because of the ridiculously magnificent performance he put on against Paulie Ayala in November '02. But Marquez, with his own near-flawless win over **Manuel Medina** this February, isn't far behind.

After those three come two more young veterans, **Naseem Hamed** and **Derrick Gainer**, both of whom have the punch and the speed to threaten anyone at 126 pounds, but have been badly hurt by inactivity. Naz has fought only once since his loss to Barrera two years ago, and it seems his best days are behind him. But with perhaps the heaviest punch in boxing in his arsenal, he can't be written off entirely just yet. Gainer has also been nearly invisible the last couple of years, thanks to a combination of bad luck, modest marketability, and a southpaw style that nobody is jumping to face. But as his dominant first round against **Daniel Seda** showed (before a second-round cut led to a no-contest), "Smoke" has the firepower to cause the Mexican marvels concern.

Next are two older veterans, Manuel Medina and **Johnny Tapia**, neither of whom appears to have much more in the tank. And depending on who wins the March fight between **Wayne McCullough** and **Scott Harrison**, we'll either have one more well-known veteran in the mix, or an exciting new face to help ensure that the featherweight division's future is as bright as its present.

Think About It: Nearly everyone would agree that, at this point, featherweight **Rocky Juarez** is the most advanced of all the 2000 U.S. Olympians, but even he is being moved unusually slow compared to past Olympians, and like the rest of his teammates, he's still not that close to cracking his division's top 10. By this time in '99, Floyd Mayweather, Fernando Vargas, and David Reid all already held major alphabet titles.

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Erik Morales and Marco Antonio Barrera go toe-to-toe

JUNIOR FEATHERWEIGHTS

Fans of the junior featherweight division (and of THE RING championships) can thank Erik Morales for beating the holy heck out of **Paulie Ayala** last November. "El Terrible" showed us all that Ayala simply isn't a featherweight. Whether Ayala got the message is unclear; he's apparently flirting with the idea of challenging the excellent Juan Manuel Marquez next. But for the time being, he's still officially a 122-pounder, which means the division still has a champion, and more importantly, it has a champion who's a pretty big star (at least as little guys go).

Below Ayala, there are two excellent fighters who both would have a viable chance of upending the Texan. One is **Manny Pacquiao**, the aggressive, exciting Filipino who has had hardcore fans buzzing for the last two years. Unfortunately, he fought less than three rounds in 2002—all against undeserving challengers—so his momentum has slowed slightly.

There's no lack of momentum for **Oscar Larios**, however. "Chololo" was named Fighter of the Year by the British publication *Boxing News* in

JUNIOR FEATHERWEIGHT

Best Puncher
Manny Pacquiao

Best Boxer
Paulie Ayala

Most Protected
Somsak Sithchatchawal

Is He Still Around?
Jorge Eliecer Julio

Matchmaker's Dream
Paulie Ayala-Manny Pacquiao

Deserves A Title Shot
Oscar Larios

Most Fun To Watch
Manny Pacquiao

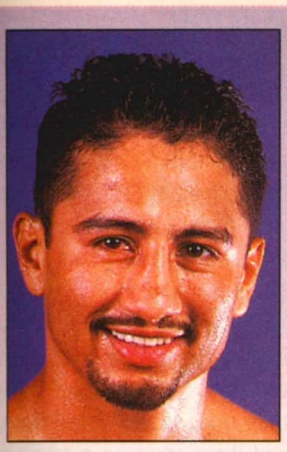
On The Way Down
Willie Jorrin

Underrated
Nadel Hussein

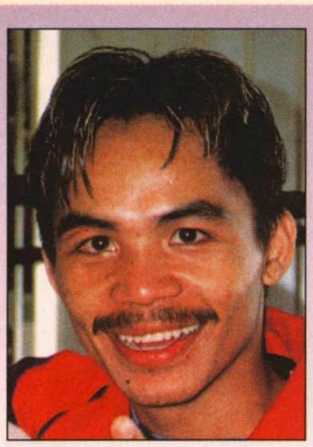
Overrated
Fernando Velardez

Best Fight In 2002
Oscar Larios KO 12 Israel Vazquez

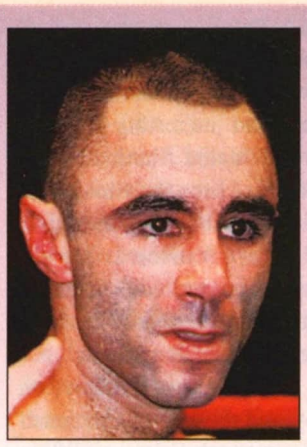
PHOTO BY SUMIO YAMADA



Paulie Ayala



Manny Pacquiao



Salim Medjkoune

PHOTO BY SUMIO YAMADA

Oscar Larios halts Israel Vazquez in the best 122-pound fight of '02

'02, and though that seems like a stretch, the Mexican did have a tremendous year. He fought four times, including a thrilling 12th-round knockout win over **Israel Vazquez** and a first-round blowout of previously undefeated **Willie Jorrin**. And he got '03 started off right by headlining the first HBO Latino *Boxeo De Oro* card. With 51 fights under his belt at age 26, Larios is one of boxing's most improved fighters over the last few years, and a definite threat to Ayala.

But that's about where it ends for the junior feather-class. **Salim Medjkoune** is a little-known titlist from France with two knockout losses to Michael Brodie on his resume. **Enrique Sanchez** is a bleeder about five years past his best. Vazquez and Jorrin have probably hit their career ceilings already. The only really interesting name farther down the rankings is **Joan Guzman**. The 26-year-old Dominican is undefeated through 18 bouts, and may be able to hang with the division's elite if given an opportunity.

Think About It: If you want to know what happens when you strip a worthy title-holder of his belt, look no farther than the case of the WBA 122-pound title. Since the Venezuela-based organization disgustingly ripped the belt away from Bones Adams in '01 after months of jerking him around, the worthless strap has moved from one man to the next faster than J-Lo ever could. **Yober Ortega** won the vacant belt in November '01 and lost in it in his first defense to **Yoddamrong Sithyodthong**, who lost it in his first defense to **Osamu Sato**, who lost it in his first defense to Medjkoune. The title has no stability, the "champs" no credibility, and thus, the WBA super bantam belt is virtually meaningless. Karma's a bitch, huh?

BANTAMWEIGHTS

We'd all been saying it for years: If Don King keeps **Tim Austin** on the vine long enough, he'll eventually wither. Well, the prophesy finally has been realized. Austin, after making just 10 defenses in a 5½-year title reign, is no longer the bantamweight king, and has nowhere near as much money to show for his time on top as he should.

At least that's one way of looking at things. The other is to say that Austin isn't necessarily faded, he's just a guy who turned back "B"-level opposition for years and then got bumped off the second he stepped in with an "A" guy like **Rafael Marquez**. Maybe King was doing him a favor, protecting him in a way. It's a stretch, but you can't rule it out.

Either way, you have to

BANTAMWEIGHT

Best Puncher
Rafael Marquez

Best Boxer
Johnny Bredahl

Most Protected
Veerapol Sahaprom

Is He Still Around?
Hugo Soto

Matchmaker's Dream
Rafael Marquez-
Veerapol Sahaprom

Deserves A Title Shot
Tim Austin

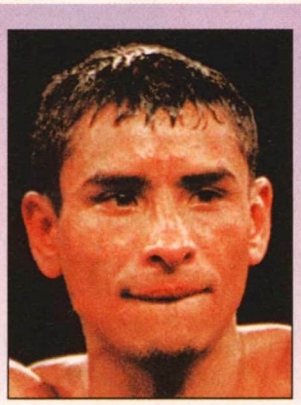
Most Fun To Watch
Rafael Marquez

On The Way Down
Danny Romero

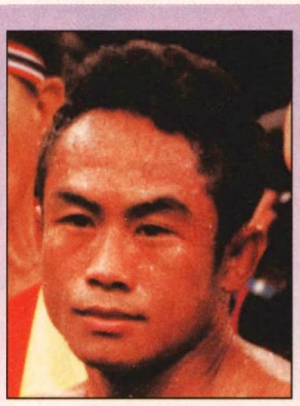
Underrated
Cruz Carbajal

Overrated
Pete Frissina

Best Fight In 2002
Tim Austin KO 10
Adan Vargas



Rafael Marquez



Veerapol Sahaprom

give Marquez his props. In a 16-month span, he defeated Mark Johnson twice and Austin once. These are two candidates for Canastota we're talking about, and Marquez scored knockouts over both of them. For now, Juan Manuel's little brother is the man to beat at bantamweight.

Of course, with a four-year title reign going, an argument could be made for **Veerapol Sahaprom** too. But he comes up way short in the what-have-you-done-for-me-lately department. Since narrowly escaping with a draw against **Toshiaki Nishioka** in September '01, Veerapol has been matched very carefully. He's scored four wins in non-title bouts against nonentities, and he's defended only against the 23-9 **Sergio Perez** and the 21-16-1 **Julio Coronell**, winning both bouts by decision. At age 34, Veerapol, like Austin, could be nearing the end.

Backing the top guys in the division are a slew of solid but unspectacular veterans, such as **Johnny Bredahl**, **Eidy Moya**, **Cruz Carbajal**, and Nishioka. The most interesting prospect is undefeated South African **Silence Mabuza**, while U.S. Olympic bronze medalist **Clarence Vinson** is slowly improving and could make a little noise in a good-but-not-great division like this.

Think About It: Boy, oh boy, did the city of Cincinnati have a rough February. While Austin has been the city's best fighter for the last half-dozen years or so, he was only one of four major boxers from Cincy to lose in a six-day span. There were also 2000 Olympians Ricardo Williams and Dante Craig suffering major upset losses, and cruiserweight hopeful Ravea Springs getting blown out in four rounds by titleholder Wayne Braithwaite. As if Cincinnati hasn't had enough bad luck in recent years with Ken Griffey Jr. falling apart and the Bengals playing like an expansion team.

JUNIOR BANTAMWEIGHT

Best Puncher
Alexander Munoz

Best Boxer
Masamori Tokuyama

Most Protected
Luis Bolano

Is He Still Around?
Edicson Torres

Matchmaker's Dream
Masamori Tokuyama-Alexander Munoz

Deserves A Title Shot
Martin Castillo

Most Fun To Watch
Luis Perez

On The Way Down
Ruben Sanchez Leon

Underrated
Oscar Andrade

Overrated
Sornpichai Pisnurachank

Best Fight In 2002
Masamori Tokuyama W 12
Gerry Penalosa

JUNIOR BANTAMWEIGHTS

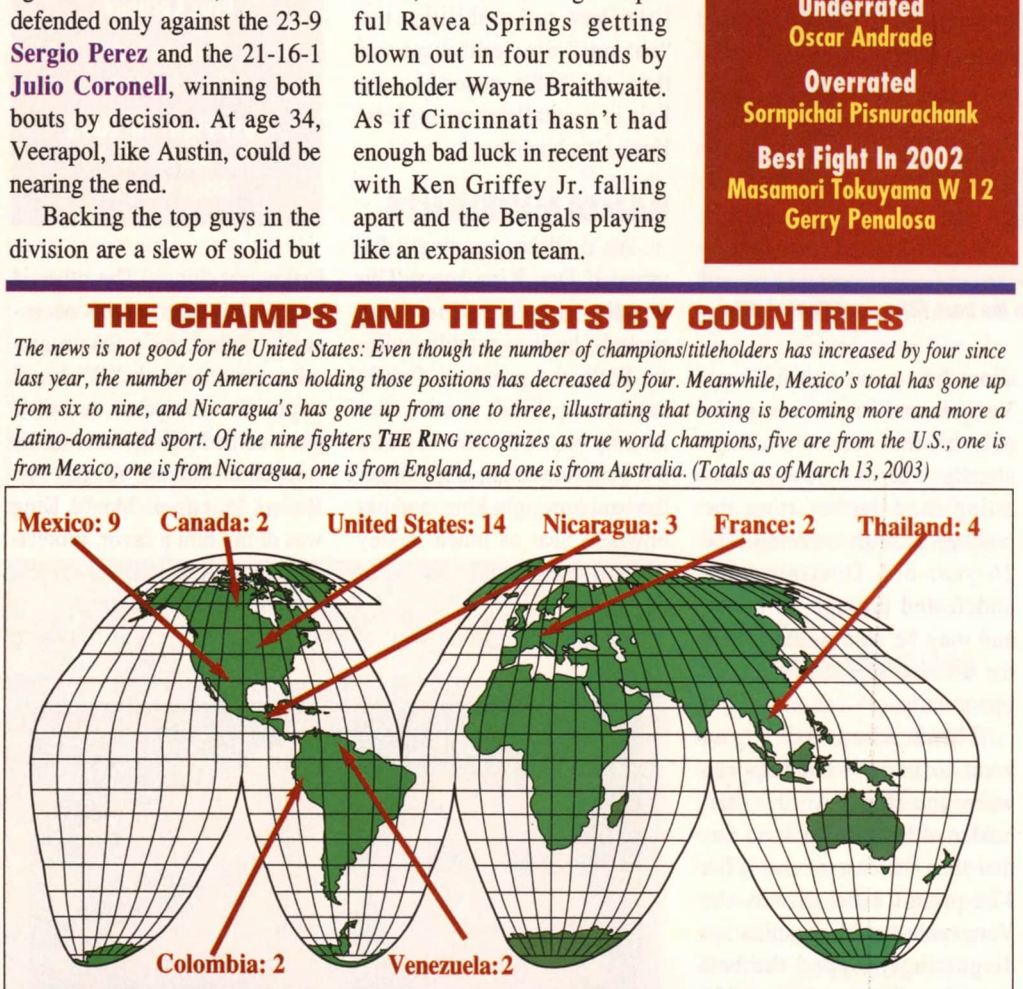
For the third year in a row now, there isn't a single American in THE RING's junior bantamweight top 10. But contrary to the conclusion to which you're about to jump, this is not a division that is without relevance in America. Unlike in past years, quite a few of the top junior bantams are plying their trade in the United States, and there are even a couple of Americans lurking outside the top 10 who might be able to make an impact.

Probably the most intriguing fighter in the division is 24-year-old Venezuelan wunderkind **Alexander Munoz**, whose perfect 23-0 (23) record has hardcore American fans salivating to see him. Munoz was scheduled to make his U.S. debut on the May 3 Oscar De La Hoya-Yory Boy Campas undercard, but that appearance is in jeopardy because Munoz was shot in the knee while jogging in his homeland in February. A full recovery is expected, but it's unclear whether Munoz will be able to make the May date. And it would be a shame if he can't, because he's scheduled to fight the excellent 26-year-old Mexican **Martin Castillo**, who has already built up a small following in America fighting for Top Rank.

Another promising young Mexican, the 24-year-old **Fernando Montiel**, has also been making a name for himself in the States (though much of it, unfortunately, came through his role in the Pedro Alcazar tragedy last June). And the smooth-boxing Montiel could make an even bigger name for himself in his scheduled showdown with former pound-for-pounder **Mark "Too Sharp" Johnson**, one of those aforementioned Americans outside

THE CHAMPS AND TITLISTS BY COUNTRIES

The news is not good for the United States: Even though the number of champions/titleholders has increased by four since last year, the number of Americans holding those positions has decreased by four. Meanwhile, Mexico's total has gone up from six to nine, and Nicaragua's has gone up from one to three, illustrating that boxing is becoming more and more a Latino-dominated sport. Of the nine fighters THE RING recognizes as true world champions, five are from the U.S., one is from Mexico, one is from Nicaragua, one is from England, and one is from Australia. (Totals as of March 13, 2003)



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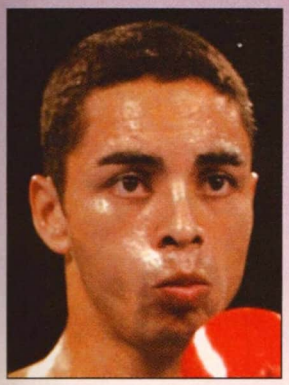


Fernando Montiel

Jose Navarro

Felix Machado walks into a Luis Perez right hand

the top 10. While most said Johnson was used up following his kayo loss to Rafael Marquez in '02, Marquez' subsequent accomplishments make you wonder about that.

Then there's Nicaraguan **Luis Perez** and Venezuelan **Felix Machado**, who staged a memorable battle in our nation's capital in January. Both are players, especially the all-action Perez. And sometime in the future, 2000 U.S. Olympian **Jose Navarro**, who's being moved well by manager De La Hoya, could enter the championship picture as well.

And last but not least, there's the top dog at 115 pounds, Japan-based North Korean **Masamori Tokuyama**. Unfortunately, Tokuyama, who has beaten Gerry Penalosa and In Joo Cho twice apiece, has never fought in the U.S. and doesn't seem to have any plans to. That's a shame, because at this point, we can't crown a RING champion without him.

Think About It: We pointed out earlier how well-traveled the WBA 122-pound belt has been over the last couple of years. But that's nothing compared to the way the WBA 115-pound belt has been bouncing around for *nearly a decade*. Believe it or not, the title has now changed hands in each of nine consecutive calendar years, from 1994 to 2002. And though Munoz was looking like the guy with the potential to snap that streak and reign a while, taking a bullet in the knee probably isn't going to help his cause.

FLYWEIGHTS

It's been a long time—decades, arguably—since there's been an important fight at flyweight. The division directly below has had some big ones (the Chiquita Gonzalez-Michael Carbajal trilogy comes to mind), and so has the division directly above (Johnny Tapia-Danny Romero), but at 112 pounds, where Romero and Mark Johnson never really had defining fights, it's been a wasteland. But that's about to change.

While it's no superfight by any stretch, **Eric Morel-Irene Pacheco** is an important fight because it matches two undefeated titlists, one of whom is a former U.S. Olympian, and, more to the point, because it will fill a vacant RING championship. The fight is likely to come off in May on Showtime, and when it's over, seven of the "old school" eight divisions will have true world champions, with bantamweight being the lone exception.

Left out of the fun is **Pongsaklek Wonjongkam**, the

FLYWEIGHT

Best Puncher
Pongsaklek Wonjongkam

Best Boxer
Eric Morel

Most Protected
Hiroshi Nakano

Is He Still Around?
Gilberto Gonzalez

Matchmaker's Dream
Eric Morel-Pongsaklek Wonjongkam

Deserves A Title Shot
Mzukisi Sikali

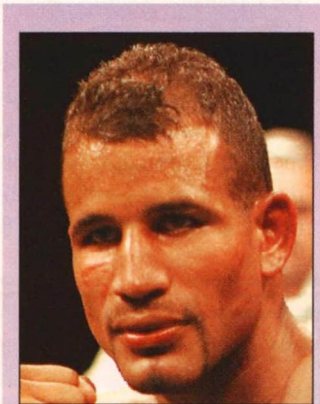
Most Fun To Watch
Pongsaklek Wonjongkam

On The Way Down
Isidro Garcia

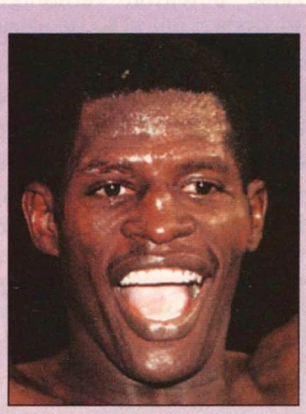
Underrated
Andrea Sarritzu

Overrated
Brian Viloria

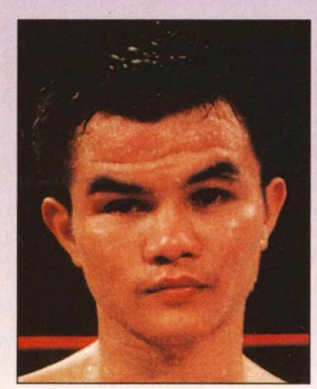
Best Fight In 2002
Mzukisi Sikali W 12 Hawk Makepula



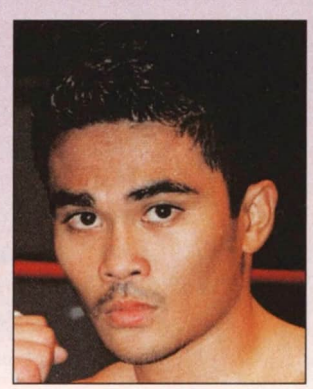
Eric Morel



Irene Pacheco



Pongsaklek Wonjongkam



Brian Viloria

busy, hard-punching Thai who holds down the number-two spot in our ratings and who owns first-round kayo wins over two other guys in the top 10 (**Mzukisi Sikali** and **Malcolm Tunacao**). Call it an American bias if you want, but nearly every great fighter has come through the States at some point, and Pongsaklek has never fought outside Asia and has been defending against mostly second-rate guys since winning the title two years ago. As long as third-ranked Pacheco is willing to take a risk and come to the U.S. to fight the top-rated Morel, the decision to recognize this as a title fight isn't a hard one.

Beyond the top three, there aren't many flyweights worth getting excited about, except for a few prospects. Olympic gold medalist **Brahim Asloum** of France, U.S. Olympian **Brian Viloria**, and American **Gabriel Elizondo** were all 11-0 as of press time and all have some potential (although Viloria's seems to be dropping with each fight these days). Then there's **Omar Narvaez** of Argentina, who became the first 2000 Olympian to win a title (albeit the WBO version) by outpointing respected **Adonis Rivas** last July.

Think About It: The blip on the pages of history that is Spider Pladner became even tinier when Pongsaklek eclipsed Pladner's record for quickest kayo in flyweight title history by destroying **Daisuke Naito** in just 34 seconds. Pladner had held the record for more than 73 years with his 58-second blowout of Frankie Genaro, by far the highlight of a career that saw him reign as NBA fly champ for all of 47 days.

JUNIOR FLYWEIGHTS

Just as the strawweight division lost a lot of cachet when Ricardo Lopez departed in 1999, so too did the junior flyweights become decidedly less appealing when Lopez announced his retirement last October. "Finito" was the 108-pound division's star, even if he was only fighting once a year and wasn't taking on the best guys available. Lopez made the junior fly class matter.

Thankfully, by virtue of his history with Lopez, **Rosendo Alvarez** matters too—not as much as Lopez did, but more than a lot of the anonymous titlists in this weight class' 28-year history have. The bad news is that Alvarez, probably the best all-around fighter in the division, seems to have learned from Lopez how to make inactivity an art form.

JUNIOR FLYWEIGHT

Best Puncher
Jorge Arce

Best Boxer
Rosendo Alvarez

Most Protected
Rafael Lozano

Is He Still Around?
Fahlan Sakkreerin

Matchmaker's Dream
Rosendo Alvarez-Jorge Arce

Deserves A Title Shot
Bebis Mendoza

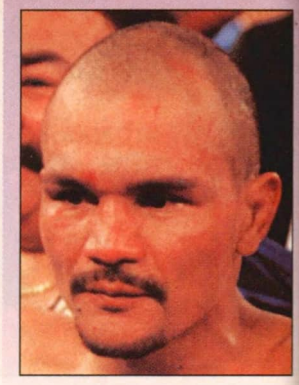
Most Fun To Watch
Rosendo Alvarez

On The Way Down
Songkram Porpaoin

Underrated
Hidenobu Honda

Overrated
Jose Victor Burgos

Best Fight In 2002
Rosendo Alvarez KO 12 Pichit Siriwat



Rosendo Alvarez

"El Bufalo" hasn't fought since January '02, and his repeatedly postponed rubber match with **Bebis Mendoza** was still being rescheduled as we went to press. Just as Alvarez made his name off of two tough bouts with Lopez, Mendoza has a degree of name value thanks to his two bouts (one DQ win, one narrow points loss) with Alvarez. If and when Alvarez-Mendoza III happens, it will be for the vacant RING championship.

The other fighter in the championship discussion is **Jorge Arce**, who also is best known for a fight he had with a far more famous foe, Michael Carbajal. Since his dramatic loss to Carbajal in '99, Arce has won 11 straight, including an impressive sixth-round knockout of **Yosam Choi** last July. Whoever wins Alvarez-Mendoza III, Arce will be the clear number-one contender.

The rest of the 108-pound picture includes your typical fading veterans (Choi, **Pichit Siriwat**, **Melchor Cob Castro**), good but not great belt-holders (**Nelson Dieppa**, **Jose Victor Burgos**), and a few decent young hopefuls (**Hidenobu Honda**, **Mhikiza Myekeni**, **Wendyl Janiola**). Not surprisingly, there isn't an American fighter in the bunch, nor is there one anywhere in any of the alphabet groups' rankings.

WHAT'S IN, WHAT'S OUT

IN	OUT
Cigarettes and beer	Anabolic steroids
Miguel Cotto	Felix Trinidad
"Touch Of Sleep"	"Big Time"
Buddy McGirt	Pernell Whitaker
Holyfield's head	Holyfield's fists
The Marquez brothers	The Diaz brothers
Permanent facial tattoos	Temporary back tattoos
Friday Night Fights	*Around The Horn*
The Oscars (De La Hoya, Larios)	The Tonys (Ayala, Marshall)
Atlantic City	New York City
THE RING championships	Alphabet belts

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

Jorge Arce punishes overmatched Agustin Luna

Think About It: So what kind of legacy did Lopez leave at junior flyweight? We know he's the greatest strawweight of all-time, but where does he rank in this division in which he only fought three times in his three-year title reign? Not all that high. Luis Estaba (11 defenses), Yoko Gushiken (13 defenses), Hilario Zapata (10 defenses over two reigns), Yung-Koo Chang (16 defenses), Myung-Woo Yuh (18 defenses over two reigns), Chiquita Gonzalez (12 defenses over three reigns), Michael Carbajal (11 defenses over two reigns), and even onetime Lopez victim Saman Sorjaturong (10 defenses) have to rank ahead of him. So at best, Lopez barely squeaks into the top 10 on the basis of the brilliance he showed in his short stay.

STRAWWEIGHTS

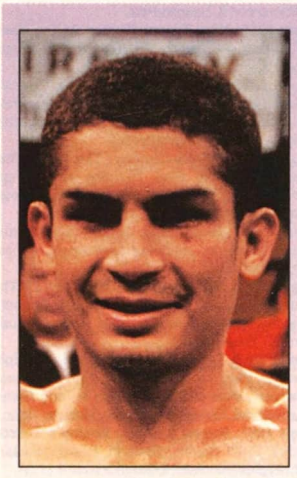
Since Ricardo Lopez and Rosendo Alvarez made like the Jeffersons and moved on up, the strawweight division has become little more than Exhibit A in the argument that there are too many weight divisions in boxing. Do we really need a 105-pound class? Isn't it reasonable to ask these guys to just pack on three lousy pounds and compete against those towering junior flyweights? Opinions are split on whether boxing should go back to just the original eight divisions, but certainly, reducing from 17 to 16 isn't going to get anyone too ticked off.

When a Bernard Hopkins or a Lennox Lewis makes just one defense in a calendar year, the world notices. But were even the most hardcore of fans aware that the number-one strawweight alive fought just once in '02? Heck, most hardcore fans probably couldn't tell you the first thing about **Jose Antonio Aguirre**. He's never fought on English-speaking television; in fact, there's hardly a single opponent on his resume who ever has. He has held an alphabet belt for over three years now, but if his lone '02 fight was any indication—a controversial decision win over unknown **Juan Palacios** last October—the 27-year-old Mexican doesn't have a Lopez-esque tenure awaiting him.

If there does exist an argument not to abolish the strawweight division, it was presented last August by Colombia's **Miguel Barrera** and Mexico's **Roberto Leyva**. While one sportswriter went overboard in saying it was just as good as Micky Ward-Arturo Gatti, Barrera-Leyva was a helluva fight, easily the best in the division since Lopez-Alvarez II. Leyva came out a tooth or two lighter and minus his belt, but he was due for a chance to regain the title (the chompers are another story) shortly after this magazine went to press.

The rest of the division is about as nameless, faceless, and hard to rank as you could imagine. **Noel Arambulet** of Venezuela, **Chana Porpaoin** of Thailand, **Keitaro Hoshino** of Japan, and **Joma Gamboa** of the Philippines have all passed the WBA belt back and forth so many times in the past three years, it's nearly impossible to keep straight who's on top. For the record, as of our press deadline, it was Arambulet.

Think About It: One good thing you can say about the strawweights is that the division is full of proven guys (even if a lot of them have proven themselves to be unexceptional). The top seven fighters in our ratings have all held major alphabet belts at this weight, a stat that can only be equaled by one other weight class currently: the featherweights. At 126 pounds, however, that's a positive statement about the division's depth. At 105, it's just one more sign that there are way too many belts floating around. ■



Jose Antonio Aguirre

STRAWWEIGHT

Best Puncher
Miguel Barrera

Best Boxer
Jose Aguirre

Most Protected
Rodel Mayol

Is He Still Around?
Ernesto Rubillar

Matchmaker's Dream
Jose Aguirre-Miguel Barrera

Deserves A Title Shot
Chana Porpaoin

Most Fun To Watch
Miguel Barrera

On The Way Down
Joma Gamboa

Underrated
Juan Palacios

Overrated
Ivan Calderon

Best Fight In 2002
Miguel Barrera W 12
Roberto Leyva

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

Roberto Leyva and Miguel Barrera duke it out

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March 1983 (108-Page Special): Larry Holmes—Fighter Of The Year. Plus: Donald Curry, Milton McCrory, Fight, Upset, Comeback, and Prospect of the Year.

May 1983: Michael Spinks Wins It All. Plus: Spinks-Braxton color, Bob Arum, Marvin Hagler, Collins-LaPaglia.

June 1983: What Now For Ray Mancini? Plus: Lupe Pintor, Paddy Flood, Bonecrusher Smith, Charlie Brown, Frazier-Broad, Chang-Zapata, Holmes-Teofilo Stevenson, Tony Ayala, Jersey Joe Walcott.

Aug. 1983: Roberto Duran: One "Mas" Time. Plus: Larry Holmes, Colin Jones, Jimmy Montoya, Alexis Arguello, Billy Petrolle, Duran-Moore, Frazier-Bugner, Resto-Collins, Escalera-Hatcher.

Sept. 1983: Sugar Ray Leonard Talks About His Past, Present, And Future. Plus: Panama Lewis, Spinks-Mustafa Muhammad, Hagler-Duran preview, Johnson-Gotch.

Nov. 1983: Gerrie Coetzee: The New Heavyweight Champ Sets His Sights On Holmes. Plus: Alexis Arguello, Murray Sutherland, James J. Braddock, Muhammad Ali.

Feb. 1984: Don King Talks And Talks And Talks. Plus: Leonard's return, Eddie Mustafa Muhammad, 1983 quotes, Marvin Hagler, Johnny Bratton, Gerald Hayes, Hagler-Duran color.

June 1984: Bumphus, Lockridge, Duva: "That Championship Year." Plus: Ferdie Pacheco, Harry Arroyo, Holmes-Coetzee preview, Pipino Cuevas, Aaron Pryor, Battling Nelson-Joe Gans, Witherspoon-Page.

July 1984: Bazooka's Aim Is True: Gomez Shoots Down LaPorte In The Battle For San Juan. Plus: Michael Spinks, Vinny Pazienza, Tyrone Crawley, Leonard's comeback, Chandler-Sandoval, Hagler-Roldan.

Aug. 1984: RING Olympic Special. Plus: Bramble-Mancini, Hatcher-Bumphus, Mark Breland, Sugar Ray Leonard, Albert Davila, Bonecrusher-Bruno.

Oct. 1984: The Beast From The East: John Mugabi Strikes Terror Into The Hearts Of Men. Plus: Olympics, Bill Costello, Davey Moore, Wilfred Benitez, King's heavyweights.

Dec. 1984: Hagler Hammers Hamsho. Plus: Barry McGuigan, James Broad, Pinklon Thomas, Julian Jackson.

Jan. 1985: Holmes-Bonecrusher Color Action. Plus: Gerry Cooney, pro debuts (Breland, Hill, Taylor, Biggs, Whitaker, Holyfield), Santos-Medal, Meza-Garza.

Feb. 1985: Showdown: Page Clobbers Coetzee For WBA Title. Plus: Larry Holmes, lightweights, Cooney-Chaplin, McCallum-Minchillo.

March 1985: Thomas Hearns—Fighter Of The Year. Plus: Annual ratings, Fight, Upset, Round, Comeback, and Prospect of the Year.

May 1985: The Rematch In Reno: Bramble-Mancini Color Action. Plus: Donald Curry, Aaron Pryor, McGuigan-LaPorte.

June 1985: Holmes' Last Hurrah? Holmes-Bey Color Action. Plus: Holmes vs. all-time greats, Paul-Arroyo, 1901.

Aug. 1985: Seven Elected To THE RING Hall Of Fame (Jose Napoles, Jake LaMotta, Panama Al Brown, Manuel Ortiz, Young Stribling, Thomas Jackling, Lord Lonsdale). Plus: Spinks-Holmes preview, Barry McGuigan.

Oct. 1985: The "Macho Man" Rides Again. Plus: Jeff Fenech, Berbick-Green, John E. Garcia, Dwight Muhammad Qawi, McCallum-Braxton.

Nov. 1985: Will Hagler Feast On The Beast? Plus: Hagler-Mugabi & Hearns-Shuler previews, Lonnie Smith, Pintor-Meza, Chuck Hull, Benitez-Moley.

Dec. 1985: Michael Spinks: Against All Odds. Plus: Curry-McCrory preview, McGuigan-Taylor, Alexis Arguello, Michael Olajide, Chavez-Pratchett.

Jan. 1986: In Search Of A Heavyweight Champion. Plus: Azumah Nelson, Arguello-Jefferson, Olympic update, Chicago boxing.

May 1986: Hagler vs. Mugabi: Marvelous Marvin Tames The Beast. Plus: Marvin Johnson, McGuigan-Cabrera, Bramble-Crawley, Tyson-Ferguson, 10 worst decisions.

June 1986: Barry's Back In The USA: McGuigan Breathes A Breath Of Fresh Air Into American Fight Scene. Plus: Bobby Czyz, Robbie Sims, Qawi-Holyfield preview, Berbick-Thomas, Bruno-Coetzee.

July 1986: Spinks-Holmes II: Who Really Won? Plus: Frank Bruno, Richie Sandoval, Kevin Watts, Tyson-Tillis, Boza-Edwards-Alli, Johnson-Burns.

Aug. 1986: Is Sugar Ray Still Sweet? Plus: Lloyd Honeyghan, Tyson-Green, Cooney-Gregg, Hall of Fame (Eder Jofre, Benny Lynch, Bud Taylor, Sam McVey, Nat Langham, John Chambers), Bernardo Pinango.

Sept. 1986: Gerry Cooney vs. Mike Tyson: Who Would Win? Plus: Cruz-McGuigan, Hearns-Medal, Tyson-Gross, Sims-Duran.

Dec. 1986: The Weekend That Shook The Boxing World. Rosario-Bramble & Honeyghan-Curry. Plus: Butch Lewis interview, Buster Drayton, Hector Camacho, Jake LaMotta.

April 1987: Hagler-Leonard Souvenir Issue. Plus: Czyz, Orlando Canizales, Mugabi-Thomas, Biggs-Snipes, Chavez-LaPorte, Bonecrusher-Witherspoon II, Haugen-Paul.

May 1987: Mike Tyson: Fighter Of The Year. Plus: Year-end awards, THE RING annual ratings, Louie Espinoza, Herol Graham.

June 1987: Vinny Paz: Phenom Or Phony? Plus: Tyson-Bonecrusher, Mark Breland, Brian Mitchell, Evander Holyfield, Czyz-Edwards, Olajide-Lee, Curry-Montgomery.

July 1987: Spinks-Cooney: The Fight That Refused To Die. Plus: The new RING ratings, Terry Marsh, George Foreman's return, Khaosai Galaxy, Hearns-Andries, Whitaker-Mayweather.

Aug. 1987: Sugar Ray: Still In Style. Plus: Leonard-Hagler, all-time heavyweight ratings, Czyz-MacDonald, Camacho-Davis.

Sept. 1987: Michael Olajide: The Look Of The Future? Plus: Tyson-Thomas, Jeff Fenech, middleweight muddle, Tsuyoshi Hamada, Juan Roldan, Harold Knight.

Nov. 1987: Tyson Wins Heavyweight Triple Crown. Plus: McCallum-Curry, Carlos Monzon interview, triple champions, Orlin & Terry Norris, Ramirez-Alli, Fenech-Richardson, Matthew Hilton.

Dec. 1987: Spinks & Lewis: Boxing's Beastie Boys. Plus: Starling-Breland, Ramzi Hassan, Honeyghan-Hatcher, Holyfield-Ocasio.

Jan. 1988: Darrin Van Horn—Million Dollar Baby? Plus: Evander Holyfield, Hill-Stewart, Juan Coggi, great hookers, AIDS.

Feb. 1988: Gold Outshines Glitter: Tate Tops Olajide. Plus: Tyson-Biggs, Kalambay-Barkley, Hearns-Roldan, fights we'd like to see.

March 1988: Thomas "Hit Man" Hearns: "Now I Own History." Plus: Lockridge & Mayweather, Tony Burton, Julio Cesar Chavez, blood.

April 1988: Evander Holyfield: Fighter Of The Year. Plus: Special year-end awards, Holyfield-Qawi II, Foreman-Sekorski, Hill-Angulo.

May 1988: George Foreman: "I Can Beat Tyson." Plus: Tyson-Holmes, Jesse Benavides, Showtime, no-knockout artists.

Sept. 1988: Sugar Ray: Here He Comes Again! Plus: Andries-Czyz, Kid Chocolate, Don Dunphy, Don Lalonde.

Oct. 1988: Mike Tyson: What Price Glory? Plus: Tyson-Spinks, Hearns-Barkley, Davey Moore.

Nov. 1988: Donny Lalonde: "Sugar Ray is Out Of His Mind!" Plus: Hall of Fame selections (Carlos Ortiz, Joe Brown, Billy Graham, Cus D'Amato, Jimmy Jacobs), Nunn-Tate, Molinares-Starling, Honeyghan-Chung, '88 Olympians.

Jan. 1989: Meldrick Taylor: Philly Phenom. Plus: Marvin Hagler, Alex Wallau, Taylor-McGirt, Olympic results.

Feb. 1989: Julio Cesar Chavez. Plus: Chavez-Ramirez, all-time lightweight ratings, Louie Espinoza, Simon Brown, Roger Mayweather.

March 1989: Hearns Next For Sugar Ray? Plus: Leonard-Lalonde, Prince Charles Williams, Hearns-Kinchen, Nunn-Roldan, Hines-Hilton.

May 1989: The Best Of '88. Plus: Year-end awards, Evander Holyfield, Pryor-Morales, Fenech-Navarro.

Jan. 1990: Boxing's Bible Reborn At Age 68. Plus: Carlos Monzon, Mike Tyson, Leonard-Duran, Daniel Zaragoza, Nunn-Barkley, Whitaker-Ramirez, George Foreman (color).

Feb. 1990: Mike Tyson: Riddick Bowe & Ray Mercer Take Aim. Plus: Bobby Czyz, Gerry Cooney, Chuck Wepner, Antonio Esparragoza, Roman-Laciar.

March 1990: The '80s—Great Fights, Great Fighters (color). Plus: Jeff Harding, Evander Holyfield, Pete Rademacher, Sharkey-McCoy.

April 1990: Pernell Whitaker: Fighter Of The Year (color). Plus: Tiger Flowers, Duran-Leonard, Chavez-Taylor preview, Jorge Paez, Ali-Cooper.

May 1990: Big George Talks Tough: "Tyson Won't Be That Difficult!" Plus: Ed Hopson, Russian fighters, grudge wars, Archie Moore, Kid Berg, Marcel Cerdan, Chavez-Cortes.

June 1990: Buster! How James Douglas Shocked The World. Plus: Michael Moorer, Camacho-Paez, Tommy Farr, excuses, Dick Tiger, Ruben Olivares-Jeff Chandler.

July 1990: "I'm Hungrier Than Ever Before," By Evander Holyfield. Plus: James Toney, Buddy McGirt, Glenwood Brown, Aaron Davis, Michael Carbajal, Jorge Paez, Kid Gavilan, Mark Breland, Ali-Liston II (color).

Aug. 1990: Chavez: His Greatness Confirmed ... Is He The Best Mexican Fighter Ever? Plus: Matthew Saad Muhammad, John L. Sullivan & Mike Tyson, Michael Nunn, Mark Breland, Harold Johnson, Cus D'Amato, Louis-Godoy (color).

Sept. 1990: Marvin Hagler—Can He Resist The Irresistible Temptation? Plus: Thomas Hearns, Sanchez-Saddler, Paul Banke, puncher vs. chin, Beau Jack, Robinson-LaMotta (color).

Nov. 1990: Tyson vs. Foreman. Can Iron Mike Stop The Blast From The Past? Plus: Bruce Seldon, best chins, Sullivan-Kilrain (color), Azumah Nelson, LaStarza.

Dec. 1990: Exclusive Annual Report: The State Of The Game. Plus: Douglas-Holyfield preview, Julio Cesar Chavez, Joe Grim, Whitaker-Nazario, Rosi-Van Horn, Benny Leonard, Douglas-Tyson (color).

Jan. 1991: Boxing's Baddest Bad Boy: Nigel Benn Plays By His Own Rules. Plus: Roberto Duran, Kid Akeem, Jose Napoles, Jimmy Carruthers, LaMotta-Zale, Dempsey-Willard (color).

Feb. 1991: Boxing On TV—Now You'll Pay! Plus: Ismael Laguna, Tommy Morrison in *Rocky V*, Reggie Tuur, Chiquita Gonzalez, Harold Green, Joe Louis.

March 1991: Hunger! It Made Evander A Champ, But ... Plus: Dempsey-Firpo, Charles Murray, Khaosai Galaxy, Nunn-Curry, Henry Armstrong, Sonny Liston (color).

April 1991: Julio Cesar Chavez—Fighter Of The Year. Plus: Tyson-Stewart, James Leija, Wilfred Benitez, Pedro Decima, Moore-Bassey.

June 1991: Pain, Frustration, Confidence, And Hope: Meldrick Taylor's Life After Chavez. Plus: Foreman-Holyfield preview, Norris-Leonard, David Kamau, Freddie Steele, Bennie Briscoe, Leonard's career (color).

July 1991: Tyson's Title Hopes: He Ain't What He Used To Be ... But It's Not Gonna Matter. Plus: Eusebio Pedroza, Myung Woo Yuh, Willie Meehan, Hearns-Hill preview, computer junior welterweight tournament, Gomez-Fenech, controversial heavyweight finishes (color).

Aug. 1991: Foreman Gives Holyfield A Fight ... And The World A Thrill (color). Plus: Making weight, Harry Greb, Kevin Kelley, Louis-Conn I, Simon Brown-Blocker, Chavez-Duplessis, Sugar Ray Robinson.

Oct. 1991: A Hit Again—How Far Can Thomas Hearns Go? Plus: Battling Levinsky, Oba Carr, Dave McAuley, Muhammad Ali, Lou Ambe... Luther McCarty, ethnic matchups, computer ... heavy tournament, Cerdan-Hagler, Roc... Marciano (color).

Dec. 1991: Evander Holyfield vs. Mike Tyso... Who Will Win And Why. Plus: Eddie Aliano, J... Britton, Muhammad Ali, Pernell Whitaker, ra... the 44 world champions, Marcel Cerdan, He... Cooper, Ezzard Charles-Jersey Joe Walc... (color).

Jan. 1992: The State Of The Game. Plus: Je... Quarry, Julio Cesar Chavez, Mysterious B... Smith, Joey Gamache.

May 1992: James Toney—Fighter Of The Ye... Plus: Myung Woo Yuh, Khaosai Galaxy, Ro... Graziano, Billy Soose, Roy Jones, James Wa... Duran-Chavez, Marvin Hagler (color).

July 1992: Does Larry Holmes Deserve A T... Shot? Plus: Nelson-Fenech II, Tracy Patters... Kelley-Dorsey, fat fighters, Buchanan-Camac... Holmes-Ali (color).

Aug. 1992: Holyfield-Holmes Prefight. Holm... "I See Me Takin' Holyfield Outta There." P... Iran Barkley, Herbie Hide, George Foreman, ... Cobb, Carnival of Champions, Harry Gr... Haugen-Mancini, Oscar De La Hoya, Ga... Tunney (color).

Sept. 1992: Chavez: Unbeaten At 80-0, B... What If He Had To Face These Guys? P... Bobby Czyz, Genaro Hernandez, Norris-Ta... Tommy Gibbons, Sugar Ray Leonard's ca... Sugar Ray Robinson (color).

Nov. 1992: Is Riddick Bowe The Next He... weight Champion? Plus: Morrison-H... Canizales-Chandler, Chavez-Camacho previ... Australia Best of Nation, Tyson speaks f... prison, Corbett-Sullivan (color), Tracy Patters... Pat Barrett, Knockout Brown.

Feb. 1993: America's Tribute To The Bro... Bomber: Joe Louis. Plus: Virgil Hill, Junior Jo... Roger Mayweather, Chicago boxing, Orla... Zulueta, Jose Napoles (color).

April 1993: Riddick Bowe—Fighter Of The Y... Plus: "Grand Slam" fight card, Toney-Ba... preview, Morris East, Joe Louis-John Henry Le... All-Time Top 10: Argentina, Fighters of the Y... (color).

May 1993: Oscar De La Hoya's Sprint To T... Title: Is He Good Enough *Now?* Plus: Carl... Gonzalez preview, Lennox Lewis, THE RING F... Freddie Pendleton.

April 1994: Michael Carbajal—Fighter Of T... Year. Plus: Brown-Norris, Kevin Kelley, Cel... Garcia, Oscar De La Hoya, Tunney Hunsa... Spinks-Foster.

Aug. 1994: Bowe's Back! Determined To D... Again. Plus: Eric Griffin, Pernell Whitaker, ... Mercer, Roger Donoghue, State of the G... (midterm report), All-Time Top 10: The Philippi...

Oct. 1994: Rating The Champs: Whitak... Toney Lead The Field ... But Roy Jone... Closing Fast. Plus: Oscar De La Hoya, Mel... Taylor, Rafael Ruelas, Curtis Cokes.

Dec. 1994: Fighting-Mad! James Toney ... Wants To Beat People Up. Plus: Durn... Robinson, Don King, Mike McCallum, injuries ... II), Tom Molineaux.

Jan. 1995: A Puncher's Dream: Oliver Mc... Upsets Boxing's Balance Of Power. P... Ruelas brothers, Quincy Taylor, "Unfinis... Business," Dave Maier, All-Time Top 10: Cana...

May 1995: The State Of The Game. P... Olzubek & Arbachakov, Gonzalez-Ke... Pazienza-Duran II, All-Time Top 10: France.

June 1995: (92-Page Special): Foreman Fro... Upon The Age Gap: "I Don't Think Ty... Should Fight Anyone But Me." Plus: L... deserving heavyweight challengers, Ca... Monzon, Kostya Tszyu.

July 1995: Pernell Whitaker: THE RING Ma... "Pound-For-Pound" An Official Title. P... Riddick Bowe, Ike Quartey, Benn-McClella... prospects, Hector Acero-Sanchez, H... Matthews, What If ... Robinson-Burley.

Oct. 1995 (92-Page Special): Mismatch? D... Tell Peter McNeeley! Plus: Fights we'd like to ... Jo-el Scott, Bronco McKart, when stop fights?

Dec. 1995: Mike Tyson (vs. Peter McNeeley): The Beast Is Yet To Come. Plus: Morrison-Lewis preview, Naseem Hamed, Chiquita Gonzalez, Gaspar Ortega, 10 best chins.

Jan. 1996: King Bruno! A Hero Always ... A Winner At Last. Plus: Julio Cesar Chavez, Oscar De La Hoya, Chris Eubank, Eddie Perkins, who's hot/who's not.

Feb. 1996: Bowe's The Man (For Now), But Is He Man Enough For Tyson? Plus: Lennox Lewis, Hamed-Barrera, Paul Banke, Vince Phillips, boxing on Madison Ave., What If ... Leonard-Pryor.

Sept. 1996: Lennox Lewis: Tough Enough For Tyson? Plus: Lewis-Mercer, Olympic team, Pernell Whitaker, Mark Johnson, Rocky, Scrapiron Johnson, heavyweight hopefuls.

Nov. 1996: Pole-Axed! Low Blows, Sinking Bowe, Ugly Show. Plus: Bowe-Golota I, Blinky Palermo, exciting fighters, Winky Wright, Joe Brown.

Dec. 1996: Our Spin On Roy Jones. Plus: heavyweight division, Olympic recap, Luis Rodriguez, Puerto Rican fighters, Danny Hodge, Saad Muhammad.

May 1997: De La Hoya-Whitaker: Can "Sweet Pea" Stop Oscar's March To Greatness? Plus: Fitzsimmons-Corbett, Junior Jones, Phillip Holiday, Don King, Zaragoza-McCullough.

June 1997 (Special Collector's Issue): Holyfield-Tyson II: What It Means For Now ... And Forever. Plus: Holyfield-Tyson fight poster, Naseem Hamed, computer unification, Sayers-Heenan, state of the game.

July 1997: Leonard: There Wasn't Even A Ray Of Hope. Plus: Felix Trinidad, David Reid, Willie deWit & Shawn O'Sullivan, THE RING's 75th anniversary, Moore-Durelle I.

Oct. 1997: Bang! Naseem Hamed Takes Aim At America. Plus: Riddick Bowe, Phillips-Tszyu, Saman Sorjaturong, Bobby Dykes.

Nov. 1997: Is Mike Tyson Finished? Plus: Ike Ibeabuchi, De La Hoya-Camacho preview, Frankie Conley, Hall of Fame, gloves,

Holiday 1997: Roy Jones: When He's Motivated, He's Unstoppable—Got That, Evander? Plus: Julio Cesar Green, Sugar Shane Mosley, boxers' day jobs, Tyson's mentor, Kid Lavigne.

Jan. 1998: Give This Man His Due! If You Can't Respect Oscar ... You Can't Respect Anyone! Plus: Sanchez-Mayweather, Morales-Zaragoza, Lucia Rijker, Marvin Johnson, characters.

Feb. 1998: Welter-Skelter! The Hottest Division In Boxing. Plus: Lewis-Golota, Olympic update, Art Shires, boxing I.Q.

March 1998 (92-Page Special): Into The Millennium With The Real Deal: THE RING's Timeline For Evander Holyfield. Plus: Hernandez-Hernandez, Briggs-Foreman, 10 champs recall "The Day I Won The Title," Johnny Thompson.

April 1998: Evander Holyfield: THE RING's Fighter Of The Year (Again!). Plus: Yory Boy Campas, Mullings-Norris, Pinkey Mitchell, Holyfield Q & A, Hamed-Kelley, Oscar De La Hoya.

June 1998 (92-Page Special): The State Of The Game. Plus: Tyson-King, David Reid, Bernard Hopkins, Ken Norton.

July 1998: Holyfield ... Tapia ... Hamed ... Jones ... Trinidad ... De La Hoya: Who Will Be The First To Fall? Plus: Magic Johnson, Chavez-Gonzalez & Lopez-Alvarez, underappreciated boxers.

Aug. 1998: Lennox Lewis: No Holyfield, No Glory. Plus: Felix Trinidad, Pat & Mike McMurtry, Chris Byrd, unbreakable records, contenders & pretenders.

Sept. 1998 (92-Page Special): This Man's Not Unbeatable! Five Top Trainers Reveal How To Solve The Hamed Puzzle. Plus: John Tate, Freddie Norwood, Andrew Golota, Roy Jones, 12 greatest finishes.

Oct. 1998: Really Hard Punch ... Really Soft Lips: Oscar Makes Legs Quiver In And Out Of The Ring. Plus: Hector Camacho Jr., Mayweather-Hernandez preview, *Tuesday Night Fights.*

Jan. 1999: Sugar Shane Mosley: The Sweet Tradition Continues. Plus: Evander Holyfield, Julio Cesar Chavez, Erik Morales, Ray "Windmill" White.

Feb. 1999: 1999! It's Gonna Be A Great Year For Boxing. Plus: Mike Tyson, Foreman-Holmes, David Reid, Eric Morel, Richie Mitchell, quitters.

March 1999: De La Hoya vs. Quartey: Does Bazooka Have The Weapons To Shoot Down Oscar? Plus: Sugar Shane Mosley, Lopez-Alvarez II, Roy Jones, Coley Wallace.

April 1999 (92-Page Special): Fighter Of The Year: Floyd Mayweather Jr.: "He's So Good, It's Scary!" Plus: Fernando Vargas, James Page, Luisito Espinosa, Robinson-Gatti II, Archie Moore, Carlos Oritz, 1998 diary.

May 1999: Is It All Over For Tyson? Plus: Terry Norris, Vinny Pazienza, Jesus Pimental, stoppages, mandatories.

June 1999: The Fans Have Spoken: Results Of THE RING Readers' Poll. Plus: Michael Grant, De La Hoya-Quartey, Antwun Echols, Ted Lowry.

July 1999 (92-Page Special): The State Of The Game. Plus: Holyfield-Lewis, Felix Trinidad, Stevie Johnston, Emile Griffith, Phil Zwick.

Aug. 1999: Candidates For Greatness: Can Anyone Fill The Heavyweight Void? Plus: Tim Austin, Naseem Hamed, Oscar De La Hoya, Max Schmeling, Holyfield-Lewis.

Sept. 1999: Taking Stock In The Fight Game: Who's Hot, Who's Not. Plus: Tony Ayala, Keith Holmes, Denny & Phil Moyer, scoring.

Oct. 1999 (92-Page Special): Felix & Oscar Go To War! Who's Going To Prevail In The Welter Shootout? Plus: Floyd Mayweather, Harry Simon, Omar Sheika, Al Andrews, 20 greatest fighters of 20th century.

Dec. 1999: Insiders' Analysis: Can Roy Jones Chop Down The Best Heavyweights? Plus: Ike Ibeabuchi, David Reid, David Tua, Carmen Basilio, Johnny Summerlin.

Holiday 1999 (92-Page Special): Heavyweight Showdowns! Holyfield vs. Lewis II, Grant vs. Golota. Plus: Francois Botha, Arturo Gatti, Michael Carbajal, Rocky Marciano, Lou Filippo.

Jan. 2000: What Does Trinidad's Victory Over Oscar Mean? Plus: Floyd Mayweather, Paul Spadafora, Ralph Dupas, boxing media.

March 2000: Lennox Lewis: The Champ For The Millennium ... Or Just For The Moment? Plus: Oleg Maskaev, Main Events, Derrick Jefferson, Jerry Buss, IBF scandal.

April 2000 (92-Page Special): Paulie Ayala—Fighter Of The Year. Plus: Evander Holyfield, Grant-Golota, Stephan Johnson, Gaspar Ortega, Kitten Hayward, writers' favorite fights.

May 2000: Lennox Lewis Will Quit ... Or Get Knocked Out, By Michael Grant. Plus: Roy Jones, Quartey-Vargas preview, Garth Panter, best chins, boxing movies.

June 2000: The Honors Keep Coming! Lenox Lewis Receives The Undisputed RING Belt. Plus: Roy Jones, Vernon Forrest, Teddy Atlas, Mike Tyson, Don Fullmer.

July 2000 (92-Page Special): The State Of The Game. Plus: Felix Trinidad, Zab Judah, Oscar De La Hoya, Barrera-Morales, Ken Buchanan, Beau Jack, Eric Bottjer.

Aug. 2000: Hamed! And The Men Who Want To Kick His Naz! Plus: David Reid, James Prince, Anthony Fletcher, Micky Ward, final beatings, white hopes.

Sept. 2000: A New Look At Lennox Lewis: Is He An All-Time Great? Plus: Winky Wright, Michael Moorer, De La Hoya & Vargas, Eddie McGoorty.

Oct. 2000 (92-Page Special): Move Up Or Shut Up! We're Sick Of Roy Jones' Heavyweight Tease. Plus: Lennox Lewis, Tapia & Romero, Hasim Rahman, Dwight Qawi, Al Palzer, fight films, best refs.

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Dec. 2000: The Hell With Tyson—Tua Is The Man Who Could Beat Lewis. Plus: Mike Tyson, Felix Trinidad, Wladimir Klitschko, Trilla in Manila, U.S. vs. World, Toxey Hall.

Jan. 2001 (108-Page Extra): Trinidad's Destiny: Jones Is On His Mind ... But Vargas Is In His Face! Plus: Naseem Hamed, Tszyu-Judah, Evander Holyfield, Willie Bean, 20 greatest middleweights.

Feb. 2001: It's Not Over For Oscar: THE RING's Five-Step Recovery Plan. Plus: Bob Arum, Dingaan Thobela, Hernandez brothers, U.S. Olympic team, future pound-for-pounders.

March 2001 (108-Page Extra): Tyson! Forget About Retirement ... A Title Shot Awaits! Plus: Ayala-Tapia II, Audley Harrison, Chris Byrd, Kirk Johnson, Julio Cesar Chavez, Boone Kirkman, 12 most exciting rounds.

April 2001: A New Beginning ... A New Middle: Felix Trinidad Is Ready To Conquer Another Division! Plus: Shane Mosley, Lennox Lewis, Paul Andrews, boxing business.

May 2001 (108-Page Extra): Felix Trinidad—Fighter Of The Year. Plus: Year-end awards, Barrera-Hamed preview, Bernard Hopkins, Joey Archer.

June 2001: Pretty Boy Floyd: Superstar Or Superbrat? Plus: Lewis vs. greats, 2000 Olympians, Henry Hall, rematches we'd like to see.

July 2001 (108-Page Extra): The State Of The Game. Plus: Zab Judah, John Ruiz, Andrew Lewis, Mark Johnson, British boxing.

Aug. 2001: Rocking The World! What Rahman's Victory Means To Boxing. Plus: Barrera-Hamed, Oscar De La Hoya, Mount Whitaker, *Friday Night Fights.*

Sept. 2001 (108-Page Extra): Exclusive RING Interview—Hasim Rahman: "Nobody's Taking My Titles!" Plus: 20 all-time greatest lightweights, Pat Valentino, Hopkins & King, Jones & Arum.

Oct. 2001: Trinidad vs. Hopkins: Middleweight Unification Superfight Analysis & Predictions. Plus: Emanuel Steward, Joe Calzaghe, Ali's opponents, Rahman & King.

Dec. 2001: The Rock Promises Another Shock! "I'm Gonna Knock Lennox Out Again!" Plus: David Reid, Jones-Gonzalez, McCline-Grant, Jackie Graves, ring deaths.

Jan. 2002 (108-Page Extra): Oscar Feeds His Critics: Did He Chicken Out Against Vargas? Plus: Wladimir Klitschko, Chris Byrd, 20 greatest featherweights, "Caveman" Bob Moha.

March 2002 (108-Page Extra): Is Tyson Ready To Regain The Title? Plus: Kostya Tszyu, Floyd Mayweather, Bernard Hopkins, Eddie Futch, fitness, ahead for 2002.

May 2002 (108-Page Extra): Bernard Hopkins—Fighter Of The Year. Plus: Year-end awards, Holyfield-Ruiz III, 2000 Olympians, Eric Harding, "Silent" Hairston.

June 2002: Lennox Lewis: I'll End The Tyson "Freak Show!" Plus: Forrest-Mosley, Freitas-Casamayor, De La Hoya & Vargas, Hagler & Leonard.

July 2002 (108-Page Extra): Exclusive Preview: The Oscar-Fernando Hatefest. Plus: Hopkins & Monzon, Francisco Bojado, Buddy McGirt, Lionel Rose, State of the Game.

Aug. 2002: Lewis vs. Tyson: Who Will Win ... And What Happens Next. Plus: Michael Moorer, Jeff Fenech, Charley Parham, Rafael & Juan Manuel Marquez.

Sept. 2002 (108-Page Extra): Vernon Forrest—Next Step In The Master Plan: End Mosley's Career. Plus: Sugar Ray Leonard, Roberto Duran, Ricardo Mayorga, 20 greatest lightweights.

Oct. 2002: Tito' Back ... And He's "Going To Make Hopkins Pay!" Plus: Ward-Gatti, Bouie Fisher, controversial scoring, ruining prospects.

Nov. 2002 (108-Page Extra): Monster Mashed! Can A New Tyson Emerge From The Rubble? Plus: THE RING 100, Evander Holyfield, Don King, Billy Joiner, junior welters.

Dec. 2002: Ward & Gatti Look To Hit Another Grand Slam! Plus: Forrest-Mosley II, Barrera-Morales II, Manny Pacquiao, Tim Austin, Nino Benvenuti, Mark Taffet.

Jan. 2003 (108-Page Extra): The Golden Boy Proves His Manhood: Is Oscar De La Hoya' Prime Just Beginning? Plus: Michael Grant, David Tua, previews of Morales-Ayala and Ward-Gatti II, overrated/underrated.

Feb. 2003: The Resurrection Of A Warrior: Cam Evander Holyfield Recapture The Glory Of His Youth? Also: Floyd Mayweather Sr., Nate Campbell, Tom & Peter McNeeley, boxing finances, pound-for-pound.

March 2003 (108-Page Extra): Hamed ... Morales ... Tapia: Barrera Has Punched His Ticket To The Hall Of Fame. Also: Joe Mesi, Ricardo Lopez, Pipino Cuevas, alphabet tales, what's ahead for '03.

April 2003: Gatti Has His Ducks In A Row: A New Woman And A New Trainer Put The "Art" Back In Arturo. Also: Barrera-Morales, Roy Jones, Phillip Ndou & Silence Mabuza, Laila Ali, Gorilla Jones,

May 2003 (108-Page Extra): Ali ... Leonard ... Tyson ... Klitschko? Also: Year-end awards, Chris Byrd, Lupe Pintor, Maxie Rosenbloom.

June 2003: Exclusive! The Ring Grills George Foreman. Also: Kostya Tszyu, Ricardo Mayorga, Diego Corrales, Tommy Loughran.

July 2003 (108-Page Extra): Now What, Roy? How Jones Matches Up Against The Heavyweight Elite. Also: Mike Tyson, Marquez Brothers, Ricardo Williams, Tony Zale.

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☐ Aug/82	☐ Oct/85	☐ Feb/88	☐ Dec/90	☐ Aug/94	**All 5 $22**	**All 12 $43**	**All 11 $40**
	☐ Nov/85	☐ Mar/88	**All 11 $40**	☐ Oct/94			
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☐ Mar/83	**All 9 $34**	☐ May/88	☐ Jan/91	**All 4 $18**	☐ Feb/98	☐ Mar/00	☐ Mar/02
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PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

MAYBE TYSON'S THE NORMAL ONE

What Our Obsession With Iron Mike Says About Us

By Ted Bodenrader

You fell in love with him a long time ago. He waltzed into your life one day like a mysterious stranger and immediately aroused your interest. You remember it well, the first time you laid eyes upon him. He was tearing through Jesse Ferguson like he was a sirloin steak. Pounding. Punishing. Pulverizing. It was an instant turn-on.

Plenty of fistic foreplay would heat up in the two years that followed, one stimulating affair after the next. It didn't matter if the date was in Tokyo, flattening Tony Tubbs, or in Vegas, peppering Pinklon Thomas. With each passing encounter, he captured another piece of your heart.

By the time he virtually wrapped Michael Spinks around a ringpost in Atlantic City, your feelings had finally climaxed. Never before had such a pug satisfied your deep lust for violence.

Yes, happiness was in abundance when Mike Tyson was your heavyweight champion. It almost seemed too good to be true. And for a while, those feelings seemed like they would last forever.

But like any other steamy relationship, yours with the Baddest Man on the Planet quickly went sour. He betrayed you. He hurt you. He turned into a monster before your very eyes.

You think about the three years you were away from him, when he was locked up in the Indiana Youth Center. And you think about all the other times he's shattered your heart into a thousand pieces.

From time to time, he'd tease you with flashes of greatness, and keep you longing for the days of old. So you kept going back to him. And then he'd hurt you all over again.

Even today, through all the pain and heartache and mind games that this man has put you through, there's one thing you still can't deny. One way or another, you still care about Mike Tyson.

"Yeah, people still care about this guy," admitted Teddy Atlas, Tyson's early trainer who dropped him long, long ago. "But all it says is that people are still into car wrecks. We hold traffic up for two hours, just for the chance of maybe seeing something exciting, something graphic, and that's what we have with Tyson. It's disgraceful, even sad. But people still care enough to look."

Yes, you still care about Tyson, just like the guy riding next to you on the subway does. The recent ruckus generated by a one-punch ravaging of Cliff Etienne is solid proof of that. You hear Tyson's name and it initiates a feeling, an opinion, a response.

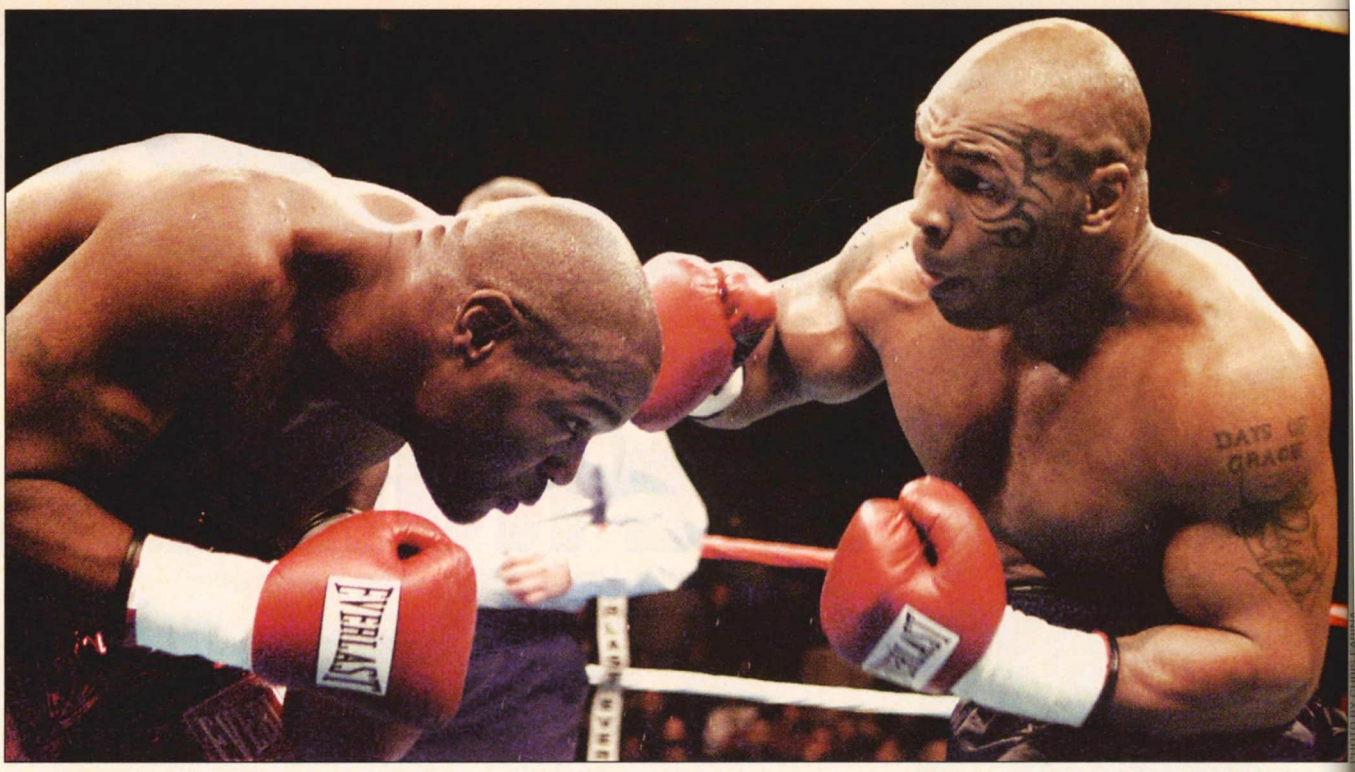
Paul Allen, Warren Buffett, and Bill Gates are among the most powerful men in the world, but they're really just faceless names to you. Tyson's the guy you talk about at the water cooler. He's the one you rap about at the bar. It doesn't really matter your profession, your color, or your age. Every shoemaker, homemaker, and caretaker has an opinion on him. Your interest is trapped in his mighty fists.

"I once told Mike, 'Man, you're going to be in a wheelchair, and people are going to wonder what you're up to, where you're at,'" said Tommy Brooks, another former Tyson trainer. "He has a phenomenal amount of appeal because of his ability and because of the way he lives his life. His fighting style is the same as his lifestyle. He's exciting. And you can't take your eyes off him for a minute."

Yet, for 15 years now, Tyson's life has been that very car wreck on the freeway, lending promise for a spectacle of gory aftermath. You've always had to slow down—or even stop for a moment—to take a peek.

And while we've exhausted the theories on why he acts the way he does, and fumbled through the same recycled stories over and over and over again, this one is actually a little different. This story is about you. It's about why you can't let go. More importantly, it's about why you even care.

"It says a lot about our society," said Atlas. "It explains why we make a President out of an amoral character like Bill Clinton, even after we know he's an amoral character. It makes it easier to live with ourselves and with our own short-



When all the prefight hullabaloo was over and the bout started, Tyson made quick work of the soft-chinned Etienne, blasting "The Black Rhino" into oblivion with a right hand that brought back memories of a vintage Iron Mike.

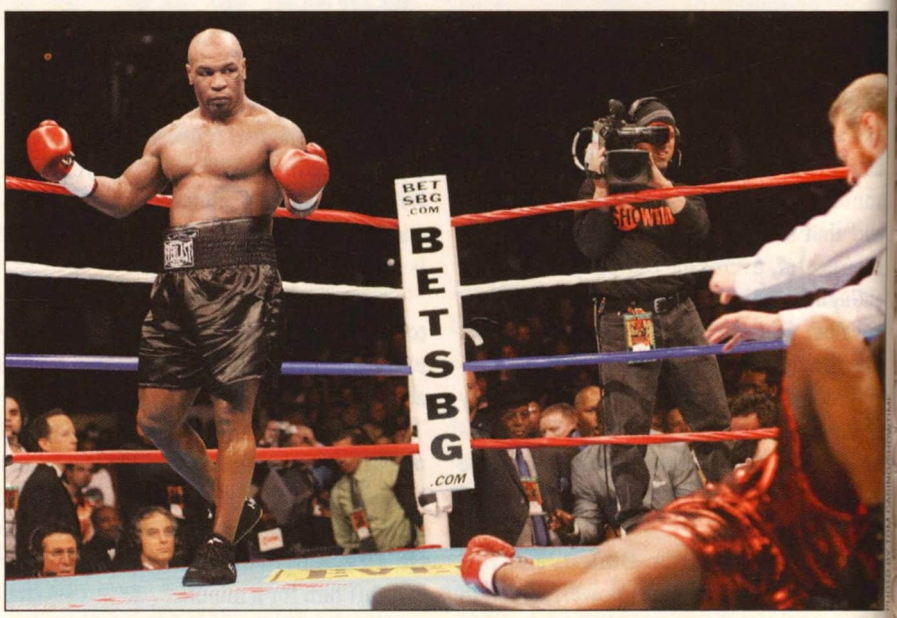
comings. It makes us feel that whatever we do wrong, it is acceptable, because we see it in these people of importance."

Deep within, you realize it's been 15 years since Tyson was of that level of importance and since he touched you in that special way. The year was 1988 when he introduced Spinks' pancreas to his taste buds in the fight that defined his prime and his "greatness." Ronald Reagan was your President, Boomer Esiason was your National Football League MVP, and George Michael was instilling your *"Faith"* in his record-breaking album.

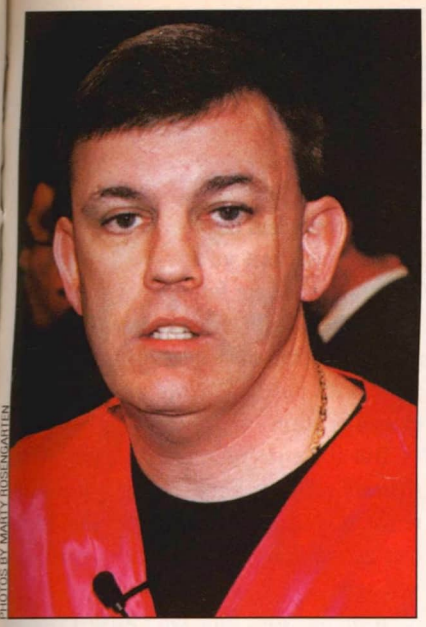
But unlike the aging geezer or the retired quarterback or the washed-up Grammy winner of years past, Mike Tyson is still at the forefront of your mind. You think about him every day. His name has become a common part of your everyday vocabulary. It's a definition of danger and destruction and insanity—all wrapped into one. And it remained in your everyday verbiage, even when he left you for a while for the infamous rape conviction a decade ago. During the absence, your heart only grew fonder as you waited for the day he'd return to you.

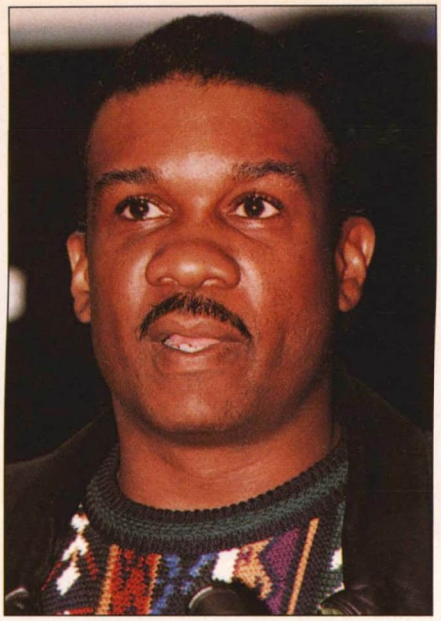
In the meantime, Evander Holyfield became your heavyweight champion. And he treated you well. He gave you everything you ever asked for, taking on every stiff challenge they sent his way. He poured his heart and his soul out to you every time out, and catered to all of your pugilistic needs. He was as loyal and honest and committal as anyone before him. But he wasn't quite what you wanted. He wasn't that inexplicable thrill ride, delivering the kind of knockouts that you felt at the pit of your stomach and tasted in the thick of your throat. He wasn't that unpredictable earthquake you didn't see coming or that time bomb that could blow at any given moment. Plainly, he wasn't Mike Tyson.

So, when Tyson finally returned to your life to make up for lost time, you were sure he would replace Holyfield and return as your leading man. But when Holyfield, the 25-to-1 long shot, beat him down like a



A nonchalant Tyson glances at Bill Clancy as the referee counts out Etienne 49 seconds into the first round. The win raised Tyson's record to 50-4 (44) with 2 no-contests, while Etienne fell to 24-2-1 (17).





PHOTOS BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

Two of Tyson's former trainers, Teddy Atlas (left) and Tommy Brooks (right), have different opinions on Iron Mike and his lasting appeal. But they agree that for one reason or another, a lot of people still care about Tyson and are willing to pay to see him fight.

dog in Vegas, there surely had to be reason why. It was just too hard to accept that Tyson was not the man you thought he was.

"One thing Mike has is a huge following," said Brooks. "You can see that after every time he loses, the people stick around to support him."

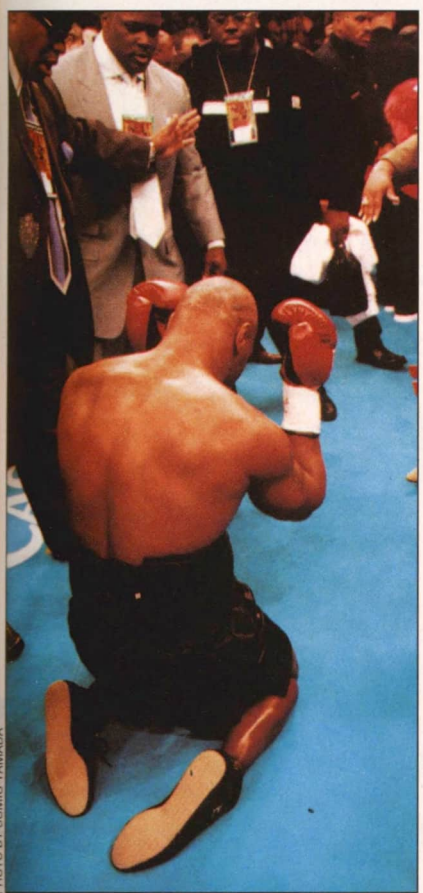


PHOTO BY SUMIO YAMADA

Tyson, a complex individual, drops to his knees and gives thanks to Allah moments after Etienne was counted out.

But then he severed your heart (and Holyfield's ear) again in the rematch, and there was a moment or two when you actually hated him. You called for his permanent dismissal from the sport. You wanted him gone from your life for good. But deep within, you knew you couldn't live without him.

And then he came back from his suspension a year-and-a-half later, meeting up with Frans Botha, and you greeted him with open arms. You forgave him for the past, just as long as he'd give up the goods.

Sure, you knew there were plenty of other fish in the heavyweight sea. But you weren't interested in how high Chris Byrd could fly or if the Klitschko brothers could spell double trouble for the rest of the division. Instead, at the end of the day, all your whims and concerns rested upon just one realm of thought: Tyson.

"People like to see others twist in the wind," said Atlas. "It's something they need in their lives."

Each time Tyson would twist, however, there'd be somebody there to momentarily straighten him out. They'd get him a new trainer, a fresh start, and then call him rehabilitated. Then they'd tell you over and over again about how much he's changed. And you believed them because

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you wanted to. Tommy Brooks and Ronnie Shields and Freddie Roach were all supposed to make him into the man you wanted him to be. But deep within, you knew the truth. You knew a dream team of trainers and psychiatrists couldn't put this fallen champion back together again.

Yet, how much of his squandered ability really matters anymore? Even after Lennox Lewis pounded the bejesus out of him last summer, you couldn't wait to see him get it on with Etienne in February. And once again, he gave you plenty of prefight theatrics to dig into. You buzzed over the fight's on-again, off-again status. You shrieked at the facial tattoo carved into his cheek, and pondered over the timeliness of it.

And with the fight's status hanging in limbo, you knew there was a solid chance of being stood up once again. But you kept your Saturday evening open, just in case he'd come around.

When Tyson did show up at the Pyramid Arena in Memphis that night, you were so enthralled, so enchanted with him, you practically forgot about the heavyweight history to be made in the succeeding weekend. You weren't talking about whether Roy Jones could play the "heavy" in boxing's glamour division. When he and John Ruiz were stepping on the scales a few days later in Vegas, you were still talking about Tyson's runaway right that flattened Etienne like a pancake.

And while you loathed Etienne for caving in to your man so quickly (49 seconds to be exact), you knew that you were really no different than he or Spinks or anyone else who gets weak in the knees at the mere sight of him. In our own little way, we all submit to Tyson's hypnotic appeal.

"It's the same kind of thing that makes people watch *The Jerry Springer Show*," said Atlas. "I can see watching it once for the curiosity factor, but to go back to it again and again and see people do that kind of thing to themselves, it's something I don't understand.

"It's some sort of human condition. People like to watch others who have fallen, who are disgraced. It's not something they would want in their own lives, but it's something they want to see in the lives of others. Something they can just get a peek at."

No sooner had they scraped Etienne off the canvas than you were peeking at Tyson's immediate future. You were longing for the possibility of Tyson recapturing a touch of the old magic that you used to share with him. Still holding out for that morsel of hope.

But if Lewis returns this summer and shatters all your hopes in their proposed rematch, you know you'll take him back, just as you have before. And just as you will again.

After all, your fling with Mike Tyson is the most dysfunctional relationship you've ever been involved with. Perhaps you'll even realize this someday—perhaps we all will—when this mental misfit is long out of our lives. And only then will we look back and wonder why we tolerated such

Part of Tyson's enduring popularity is his unorthodox lifestyle. Prior to the Etienne fight, he entertained the media by bringing his infant son, Miguel, to the prefight press conference, even giving Miguel a chance to address the crowd.

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

From the point of view of Tyson and his millions of fans, the most important thing about the emphatic knockout of Etienne is that it kept Tyson in the running for future multimillion-dollar paydays. A rematch with Lennox Lewis remains among those posibilities.

abuse, tolerated it when we knew all along he was unhealthy for us. And we'll reflect on why we kept waiting for him to change, kept holding out for some form of redemption that, in our hearts, we knew would never come.

Evander Holyfield and Lennox Lewis wore their championship belts like badges of honor, and worked hard to never let us down. Mike Tyson, on the other hand, could never give us the commitment we were looking for. He never really had much time for us. He worked just 50 rounds in over 10 years and only trained when he damn well felt like it. He was never true to his trade or his talents or to ensuring our happiness. He was busy cheating us with his extracurricular career—the partying, the carousing, and the countless rendezvous with trouble.

"Mike has more talent in his pinky finger than anyone else in the top 10 has in their entire body," said Brooks. "The problem is, Mike doesn't want to put forth the effort. He knows he's only doing this for money because he can still put asses in the seats."

"He's always been a very fractured, very selfish individual," said Atlas. "When you talk about loyalty, you have to keep in mind that loyalty is a character trait. It depends on qualities of strength, qualities of discipline, qualities of caring. Tyson's been devoid of those qualities for a long time. He's never been one of much merit."

But then again, maybe you and I were never really in love with Mike Tyson to begin with. Maybe he is more like an infatuation, a fantasy of our fistic desires that we can't help but indulge in. He's like a scintillating one-night stand that we want to relive over and over again. Sure, he had all the makings to fulfill our superficial needs—the power, the ferocity, the physique that was built for destruction. But on the inside, he offered no substance of any kind.

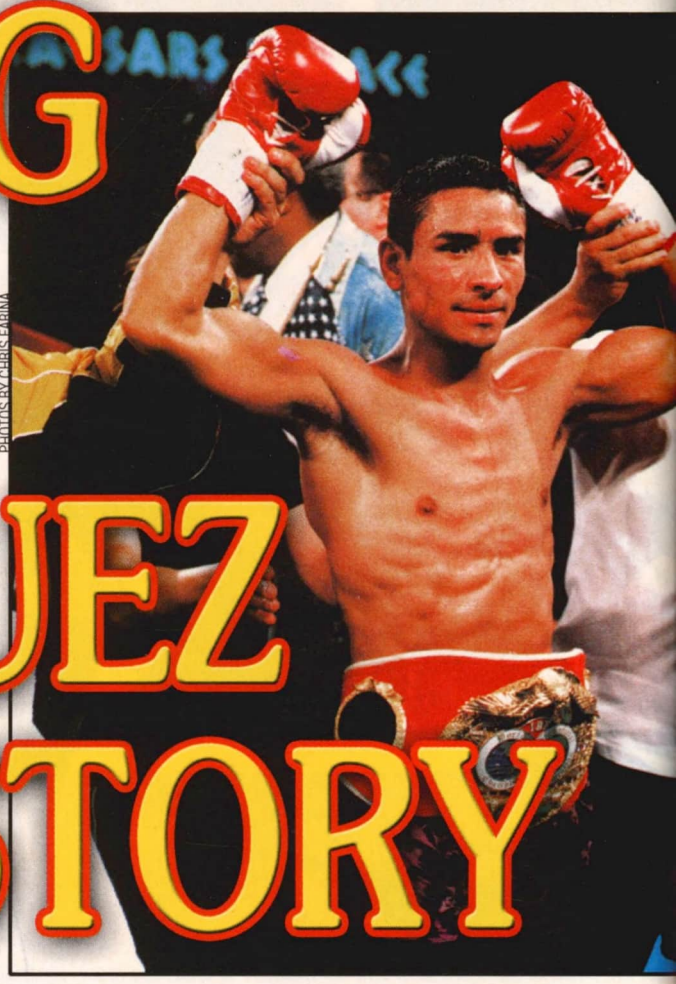
"Punching power can just show up," said Atlas. "Punching power is something that you're born with. Loyalty doesn't just show up. Your ability to care and be true to others, it doesn't just show up. It's something you have to develop as you develop as a person. Tyson never developed into a decent person."

Either way, this long-lasting love affair we've had with the wreckage known as Mike Tyson, it really says more about ourselves than it does about the object of our fatal attraction. We continue to watch this freak show carry on from one city to the next, knowing well it can only end in an inevitable car wreck. And perhaps there's a simple reason to explain why we even care.

There must be a bit of a freak in all of us. ■

Ted Bodenrader is a freelancer writer based in the Boston area and a regular contributor to this magazine.

MAKING THEIR MARQUEZ ON HISTORY



PHOTOS BY CHRIS FARINA/CORBIS SYGMA

By Nigel Collins

It's a story as old as boxing and the most natural thing in the world: An elder sibling finds success in the ring, and his confidence and self-esteem grow in direct proportion to the number of trophies on the family mantelpiece. Suddenly, he has new respect in the neighborhood and all the pretty girls know his name. This transformation doesn't go unnoticed, and it's not long before his baby brother is tagging along with him to the gym, eager to follow in his big brother's footsteps.

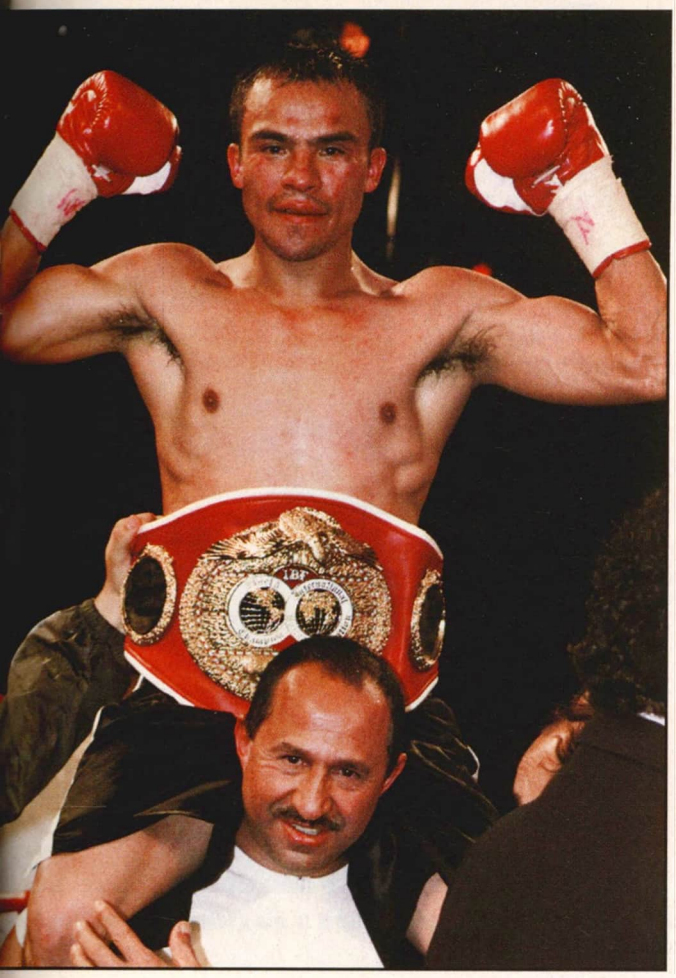
Like virtually every fighter, each brother dreams of one day having a championship belt strapped around his waist. It doesn't happen very often—just a dozen times in the history of gloved fighting—but every once in a great while, those dreams come true. And sometimes, if you pay close enough attention, you can see it coming.

In the August 2002 issue of THE RING, we asked which of the Marquez brothers, featherweight Juan Manuel or bantam Rafael, would be first to win a title. That question was answered on the first day of February '03, when Juan Manuel stopped faded warhorse Manuel Medina to win the vacant IBF 126-pound belt. Then, just two weeks later, younger brother Rafael TKO'd previously undefeated Tim Austin to capture the IBF 118-pound crown. Together, they form the first brother tandem to hold major titles simultaneously since Rafael and Gabriel Ruelas both wore alphabet belts in 1995.

When you look over the relatively short list of brothers who have won titles, it becomes clear that one of the brothers generally has a better overall career than the other. And that, too, is only natural. When it comes to boxing, all men are not created equal, even when they are brothers.

At this juncture, it's difficult to determine which of the Marquez brothers will eventually turn out to be the best. Juan Manuel has had a longer career and has, overall, fought better opposition. But he's already 29 years old, while Rafael is only 27 and should have more time left to establish his legacy. But let's put the sibling rivalry aside until a later date, when we have more data to go on, and instead look at the Marquezes in comparison to other brothers who have won titles.

First came Abe and Monte Attell, who, along with Leon and Michael Spinks, are the only brothers to both win genuine world championships; the rest



Can They Be The Best Since The Spinks Brothers?

Both Rafael (opposite page) and Juan Manuel Marquez (left) are sporting new IBF belts following title-winning victories. They are the first brothers since Gabe and Rafael Ruelas to simultaneously hold major titles.

claimed only partial or alphabet titles.

Promoter Tex Rickard considered Abe Attell "the greatest fighter of any weight class," and that's high praise coming from a man who promoted such legends as Jack Dempsey, Jack Johnson, and Joe Gans. Apparently, Abe was one of those fighters who could do it all—when he felt like it.

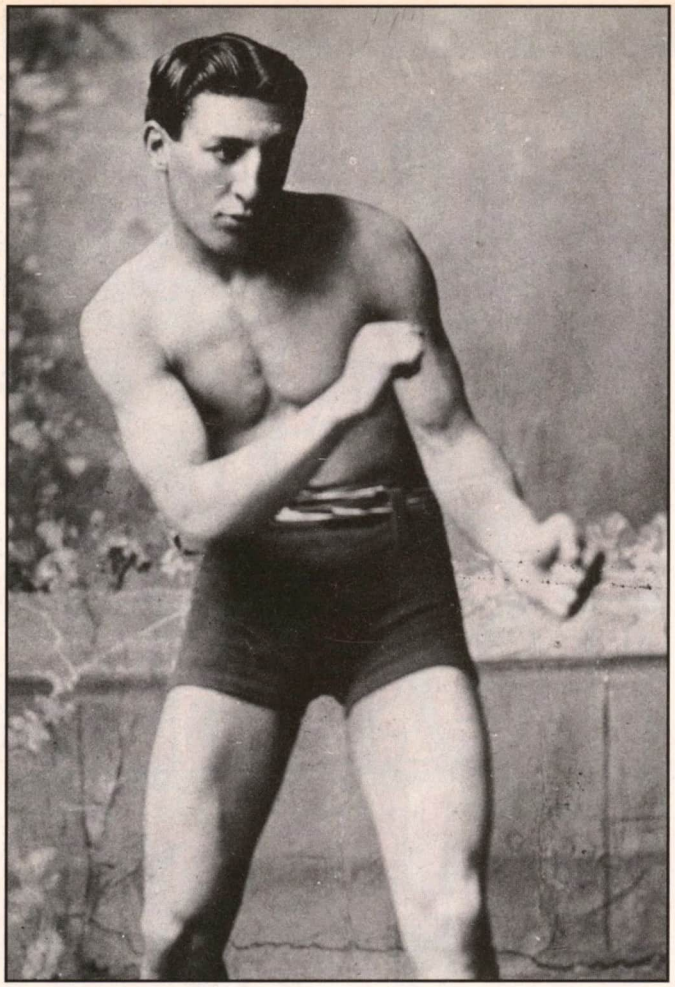
Attell won the featherweight title in September 1903, outpointing Johnny Reagan over 20 rounds. He didn't keep it long, squeezing in just two defenses before getting knocked out by Tommy Sullivan in June '04. But Abe was back on top by February '06, when he regained the vacant 126-pound crown with a 15-round decision over Jimmy Walsh. His second reign lasted until February 1912 when, following a remarkable two-reign total of 21 successful defenses, he lost a 20-round decision to Johnny Kilbane.

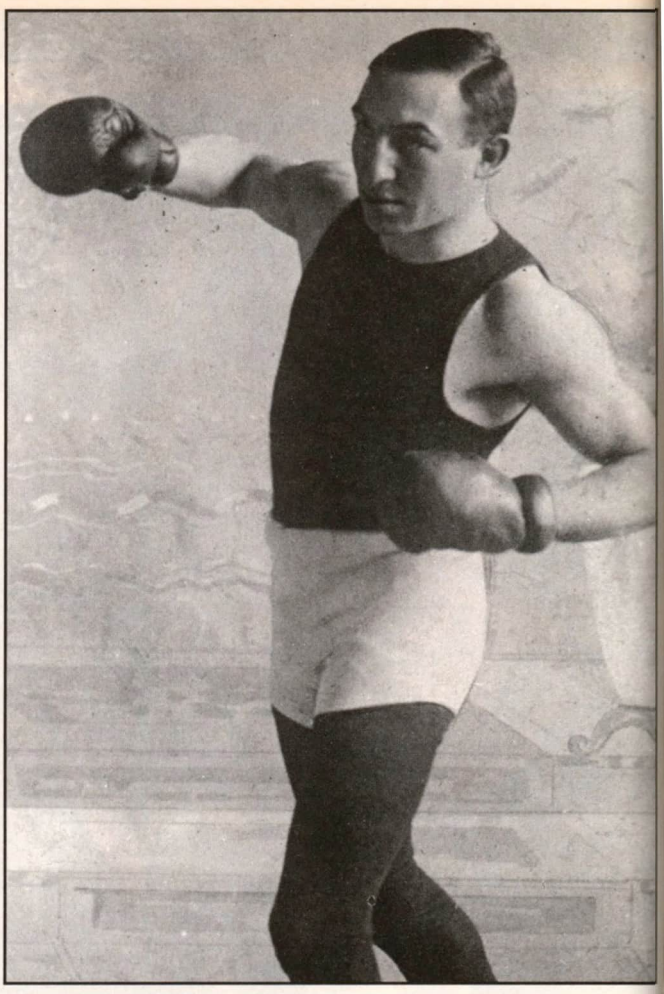
While Attell was undoubtedly a great fighter, his legacy is tarnished by allegations that he threw some of his fights. He was also very chummy with mobster Arnold Rothstein, the man who fixed the 1919 World Series. In 1961, Abe told *Cavalier* magazine that he knew about the infamous Black Sox fix and passed messages between Rothstein and gambler John "Sport" Sullivan, one of the original conspirators credited with hatching the scheme. Abe also admitted parlaying a $9,000 bankroll into $30,000 by betting on Cincinnati to beat Chicago. With a history like that, we'll never know for sure how much of Abe's remarkable 91-9-18 (53) with 51 no-decisions and 2 no-contests record was on the level.

Younger brother Monte was nowhere near as good or as well-known as Abe, but he was good enough to knock out Frankie Neil in June 1909 to capture the vacant bantamweight title. He lost the title the following year, but kept pushing leather until 1917, finishing with a mediocre record of 38-27-14 (18) with 26 no-decisions and 1 no-contest.

The next brothers to win titles were Vince and Joe Dundee from Baltimore. Neither was a great fighter, and both benefited from the shrewd management of Max Waxman, whom some old-timers considered on a level with Jack Kearns and Jack Hurley when it came to maneuvering his boys into positions they didn't always deserve.

Not that the Dundees were bums; they were solid pros. Joe, a good bodypuncher with guts and a durable chin, was already a veteran of close to 100 pro bouts before he got a shot at the welterweight title,





Abe (left) and Monte Attell were the first brothers to win world championships and only one of two sets of brothers to win undisputed titles. Only Abe, however, made it into the Hall of Fame, as Monte finished with a career record only slightly above .500.

which may explain why he didn't really do much with it after decisioning Pete Latzo in June 1927. Joe made one defense before losing the title to Jackie Fields in July '29 via disqualification. Less than two years later, he retired with a record of 85-23-11 (23) with 5 no-decisions and 3 no-contests, but at least he'd been a legitimate world champion, which could not be said for brother Vince.

While Joe had earned his shot at Latzo by beating, among others, future Hall of Famer Mickey Walker, younger brother Vince got his crack by losing two in a row to Teddy Yarosz. But Waxman persuaded John Buckley, the manager of NBA middleweight titleholder Lou Brouillard, to take an easy defense against the supposedly washed-up Vince Dundee. Sucker! Vince took the title with a 15-round decision in October '33 and made two defenses before Yarosz fittingly took the title away via 15-round decision. Vince retired in '37 with an overall log of 91-19-7 (19) with 4 no-contests.

In the 1970s, as the alphabet organizations became further entrenched, it became much easier for brothers to win titles, and the frequency increased considerably. Mexico's Ricardo Arredondo won the WBC super featherweight belt in October '71 and held it until February '74, but it wasn't until May '86 that his younger brother, Rene, became WBC super lightweight titleholder. Ricardo, a fluid boxer-puncher with crippling power, made five successful defenses and retired in '79 with a record of 77-22-1 (58). Rene, who only held the belt for two months, was 47-12 (41) overall and remains little more than a footnote to a footnote.

Meanwhile, Leon Spinks had shocked the world by upsetting Muhammad Ali to win the heavyweight title in February '78. Then, in July '81, Michael Spinks won the WBA light heavyweight title.

The recognition gap between title-holding brothers has never been wider than the one between the Panamanian pair of Eusebio and Rafael Pedroza. Eusebio, who was enshrined in the International Boxing Hall of Fame in 1999, ruled as WBA featherweight king from April '78 until June '85, tallying a division-record 19 defenses. Eusebio, 42-6-1 (26) with 1 no-contest, was an international star, fighting in the U.S., Japan, South Korea, Italy, France, and England, as well as his native Panama. Younger brother Rafael, 19-8-1 (15), is even more obscure than Rene Arredondo, but he held the WBA super flyweight belt for four months, and that makes him a member of this exclusive club.

Next came the star-crossed Curry brothers, Donald and Bruce. Donald was the glamour boy, the one for whom great things were predicted. Bruce was the problem child, unruly and troubled, the kind of guy who never seemed to get a break.

To a degree, Donald lived up to expectations, winning first the WBA welterweight belt and eventually adding the IBF and WBC versions to become the undisputed 147-pound champion in December '85. But less than a year later, his unbeaten record and title belts were gone, swept away by a rampaging Englishman named Lloyd Honeyghan. It was a huge upset, one from which Curry never totally recovered. True, Donald regrouped and won the WBC super welter title in July '88, but he kept it less than a year, and retired in April '97 with a mark of 34-6 (25).

Bruce wasn't as athletically gifted as Donald, but he was fearless and always gave his all. Still, he had pretty much been relegated to a journeyman role when he won the WBC super lightweight title by outpointing Leroy Haley in May '83. He made a pair of defenses and then lost the belt to Bill Costello in January '84. Shortly afterward, Bruce, 35-8 (17), had a mental meltdown and pumped a couple of shots through a gym door. He spent some court-ordered time in a mental health institution, had one more fight in '86, and then gradually faded from the scene, a forlorn figure who deserved better than he got.

These family affairs continued at a rapid clip in the '80s. There were the twins from Thailand, Khaosai and Khaokor Galaxy, and Gaby and Orlando Canizales from Texas.

Khaosai, so far the only Thai to be inducted into the International Boxing Hall of Fame, was a superstar in Asia whose punching powered earned him the "Thai Tyson" tag. He won the WBA super flyweight title in November '84 and held it until he retired in December '91 with a record of 50-1 (44), including 19 successful defenses. It was an impossible act to follow, and southpaw Khaokor didn't come close, but was still good enough to twice win the WBA bantam title, reigning first from May '88 until August the same year, and then again from July '89 until October '89. He retired with a record of 24-2 (18).

Hard-hooking Gaby was the first member of the Canizales clan to win a title, ending the career of Richie Sandoval

BIG BROTHER BREAKS THROUGH

Although promoter Top Rank never advertised it as such, the match between Juan Manuel Marquez and Manuel Medina for the vacant IBF featherweight title went a long way toward righting a couple of wrongs.

First, Marquez had been shamefully avoided when he was the number-one contender to Naseem Hamed and was overdue for a title shot. Moreover, Medina, who had previously held both the IBF and WBC belts, had lost the last of these to Johnny Tapia in a decision widely held as one of the worst ripoffs of 2002.

But alphabet madness being what it is, Tapia had been subsequently stripped for challenging world champion Marco Antonio Barrera, so the Marquez-Medina bout was born.

Both Marquez, 125½, and Medina, 125, looked sharp in the first round of their scheduled 12-rounder at Mandalay Bay. But when the punches started flying in earnest in the second, Marquez' superior firepower quickly came into play. A nifty left-right-left combination floored the 31-year-old Medina early, but he survived and was punching back as the round drew to a close.

Things only got worse for Medina as the fight progressed—his right eye began to swell in the third and he was rocked late in the fourth, spoiling what had been a decent round for him up to that point.

The fifth was another big round for Marquez, but he eased up in the sixth, most likely gathering himself for a final assault. Approximately a minute into the seventh, he slammed a left hook into Medina's face and put him down again. Medina, whose heart has always been much bigger than his punch, struggled up inside the count, but after consulting with the doctor, referee Robert Byrd (USA) wisely called a halt 1:18 into the round. It was a good move, as Medina's right eye was completely swollen shut and he'd already taken more than enough punishment.

The win upped Marquez' record to 40-2 (32), while Medina fell to 60-13 (27). Finally a marquee player in the featherweight division, Marquez went from fourth to second in THE RING ratings on the strength the victory, and is now well-positioned to fight either world champion Barrera or WBC beltholder Erik Morales.

Television: Pay-Per-View

(2-1-03)

—NC

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

Juan Manuel Marquez rocks Medina with a right

in March '86 with a brutal seventh-round TKO. But Gaby was not destined to rule long, and he lost the title to Bernard Pinango in June '86. Gaby, 48-8-1 (36), fought on with varying success until June '91.

Orlando was a consummate craftsman and crackerjack combination puncher. He won the IBF 118-pound belt in July '88, and still wore it 16 successful defenses later when, in January '95, he moved up in weight to go after WBA super bantam boss Wilfredo Vazquez. Bad move. Vazquez outpointed him, and Orlando's marvelous skills began to slip. He called it quits in '99, leaving a record of 50-5-1 (37).

Three sets of brothers won titles in the 1990s—Terry and Orlin Norris, Rafael and Gabe Ruelas, and Christophe and Fabrice Tiozzo. Of the group, Terry Norris undoubtedly accomplished the most, even though he got off to a horrible start, getting iced by reigning WBA super welterweight titleholder Julian Jackson in his first attempt to win a title. But Terry quickly rebounded, winning the WBC

BABY BRO BECOMES BANTAM BOSS

Two weeks later and couple of blocks down the Las Vegas strip at Caesars Palace, it was Rafael Marquez' turn to see if he could join his brother among major titleholders. Unlike Juan Manuel, however, Rafael was not fighting a shopworn veteran. Instead, he would be challenging IBF bantamweight titleholder and 4-1 favorite Tim Austin, who was unbeaten in 26 pro fights and making his 10th defense of the belt he'd won in July 1997.

Nothing significant happened the first three rounds, and a smattering of boos was heard as both men boxed cautiously at long range. Marquez, 118, Mexico City, broke through with several right hands to the head early in the fourth to have Austin under severe pressure. But southpaw Austin, 118, Cincinnati, Ohio, rallied back late in the round, scoring with sharp lefts.

The 31-year-old Austin, who had looked stiff and a bit unsure of himself during the early going, started walking Marquez down in the seventh, scoring to the body and driving him backward. It looked like "The Cincinnati Kid" was beginning to take over, but that changed dramatically in the eighth.

Marquez, 27, threw it into another gear and exploded out of his corner and tore into Austin, hurting him with a right to the head. Marquez rushed in, leaving himself open to a counter left that connected flush and staggered him into the ropes. What had been a sleeper had abruptly turned into an adrenaline-pumping punchout.

Austin, thinking he had his man, made the same mistake Marquez had make a few seconds earlier, and went for broke. Marquez covered up, regrouped, and counterattacked, blasting Austin with two lefts and a right that sent him down and through the ropes, his rump coming to rest on the ring apron.

Austin, showing the same championship heart he did winning the title with a broken jaw back in 1997, somehow climbed back into the ring inside of referee Vic Drakulich's count, but Marquez' follow-up flurry convinced the third man to rescue the groggy Austin at the 2:20 mark. According to CompuBox, Marquez landed 36 of the 58 powerpunches he'd thrown in the final round, a devastating barrage that resulted in Austin, 25-1-1 (22), losing both his belt and his unbeaten record.

"I didn't go for it earlier because he hit me to the body," said Marquez, after improving his resume to 29-3 (27). "But my corner told me to quit wasting time, so that's when I went for it all."

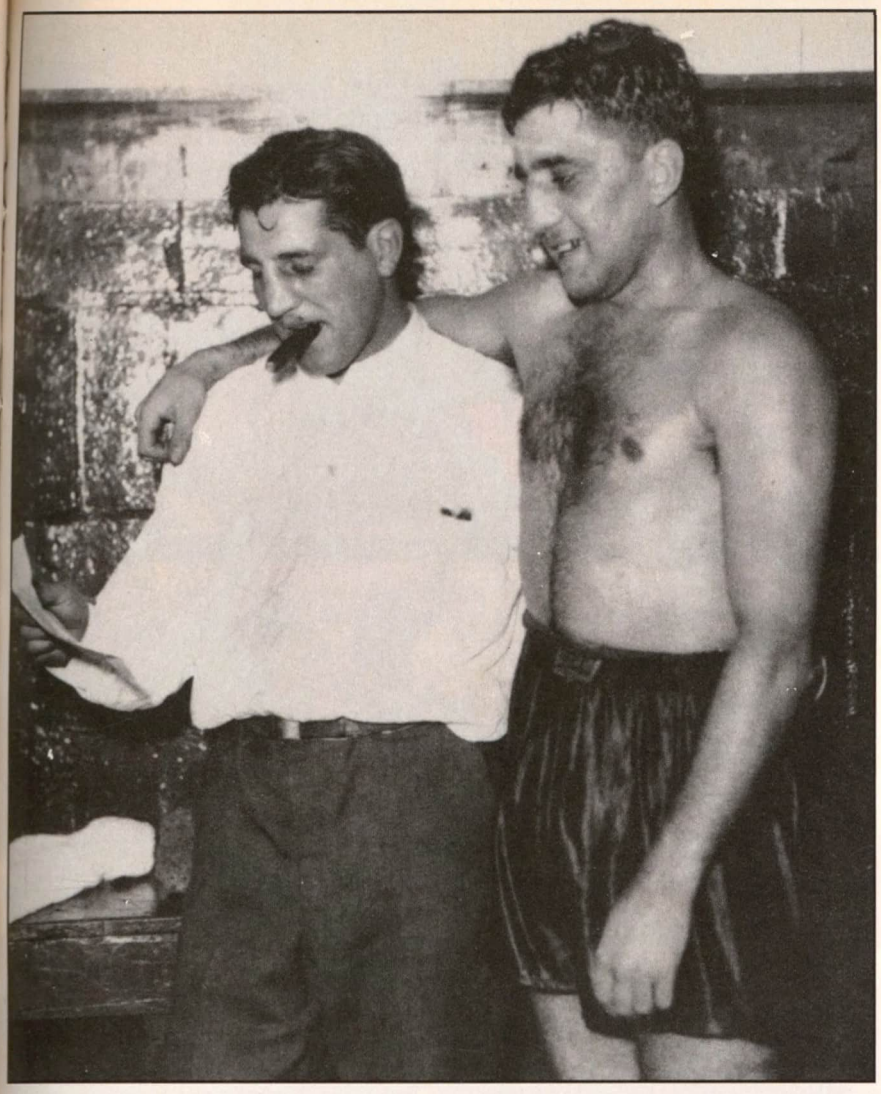
It was a bittersweet result. Marquez is a sparkling, lethal-hitting performer who figures to give fans plenty of thrills in the coming years. But it was sad to see Austin, perhaps the most neglected talent in Don King's vast stable, lose the title without ever having a career-defining fight.

Television: HBO
Promoter: Don King
(2-15-03)

—NC

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

Rafael Marquez en route to handing Austin his first loss



Vince Dundee (right) and brother Joe in the locker room following Vince's unexpected decision victory over Lou Brouillard in 1933 to win the NBA middleweight title. By then, stogie-chomping Joe had lost the welterweight title and retired from the ring.

version of the 154-pound crown in March '90 via a stunning first-round kayo of John Mugabi.

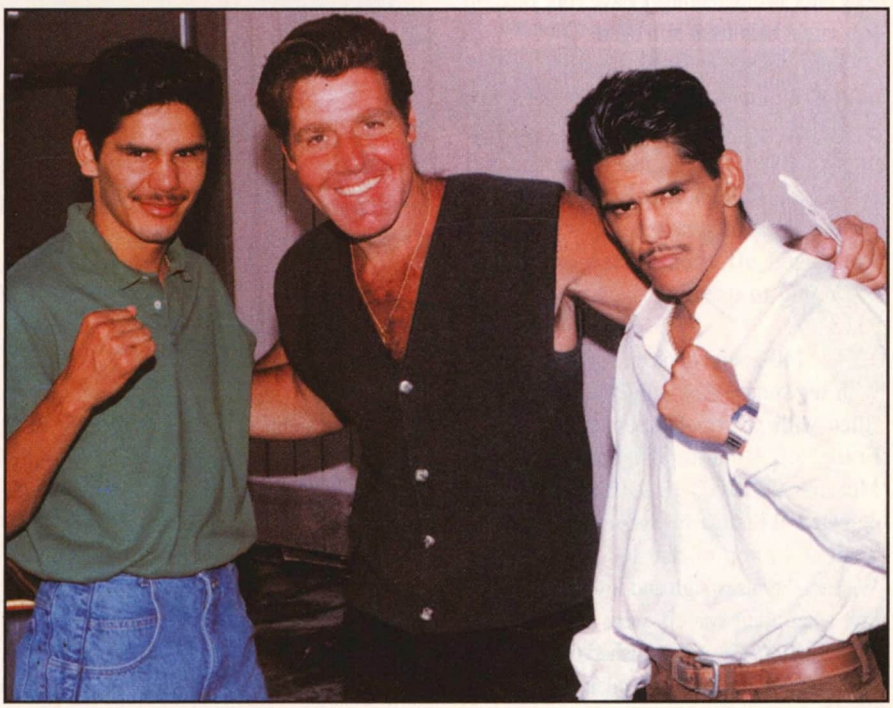
Although Terry held one version or another of the junior middleweight title throughout most of the '90s (WBC three times, IBF once), there were also setbacks. His chin wasn't as good as the rest of his physical makeup, and he also had a tendency to lose his composure. These two shortcomings led to a knockout loss to Simon Brown and a pair of inexplicable DQ defeats to clubfighter Luis Santana. Terry finally fell from the ranks of beltholders for good in December '97, when Keith Mullings stopped him in the ninth round. Two losing fights later, he retired with a 47-9 (31) record.

Orlin Norris was one of those fighters who never found the right groove, fighting first as a heavyweight, then dropping down to cruiser, where he enjoyed his greatest success, and finally going back up to heavyweight the final few years of his career. But he wasn't Evander Holyfield, and was already slowing down by the time he settled on cruiser. Even so, Orlin won the WBA belt in November '93, made four successful defenses through July'95, and finished with a record of 52-8 (28) with 1 no-contest (vs. Mike Tyson).

While Gabe and Rafael Ruelas both won alphabet titles and were briefly the hottest fighters on the West Coast, they are probably doomed to be best remembered for the fights they lost to more famous fighters. Maybe it's not fair, but it happens.

Rafael won the IBF lightweight title in February '94, and Gabe captured the WBC super featherweight title seven months later, but by the end of the following year both were ex-titleholders. There were extenuating circumstances in Gabe's case: the death of challenger Jimmy Garcia following their bout in May '95. In his next match, Gabe, still suffering from psychological repercussions of the Garcia fight, was knocked out by Azumah Nelson.

(Continued on page 82)



Rafael (left) and Gabe Ruelas pose with trainer Joe Goossen in 1994. Both fighters won alphabet belts that year, but didn't stay on top very long.

By Kevin Iole

PHOTOS BY HOLLY STEIN/HBO

The bout wasn't over more than an hour when Juan Valenzuela had a piece of paper pushed in his hands. The guy doing the pushing was Don King.

Valenzuela, a last-minute substitute who had just stunned a national television audience on HBO by scoring a unanimous decision over 2000 U.S. Olympian Ricardo Williams Jr., wasn't sure what to think.

King had just handed him a promotional contract. This is a guy who was coming off back-to-back losses, who was brought in 48 hours before the fight when the original opponent for Williams, Juan Carlos Rubio, was diagnosed with a hole in a retina. The last thing he was thinking of was getting a multi-fight deal with King. It was a payday and a chance to fight on national TV, and for Valenzuela, that was plenty. But Valenzuela was never intimidated and showed plenty of pluck, which was more than enough for King.

"I never heard of the guy before I saw him step into the ring," King said, cackling, a day later. "But he showed me something. We were desperate for a live body to get in there and stand up, but he showed some pizzazz. I liked what he had. Sometimes, you have to take a chance on a kid like that. I don't know why, it's just a feeling I have, but this kid, you might hear from him again."

Lou DiBella can only hope the same is true of Williams. DiBella gave Williams a $1-million signing bonus after Williams captured a silver medal in the 139-pound division in the Olympics. DiBella immediately began talking of greatness for Williams and wasn't put off even though many were beginning to question the fighter's work ethic.

The 140-pound division is not only heavy with legitimate title contenders, it is also filled with potential superstars. Williams, Francisco Bojado, Miguel Cotto, and Muhammad Abdullaev, the Uzbekistani who defeated Williams in Sydney for the gold, were at the top of that list. DiBella sung Williams' praises high and low and predicted that when their careers were over, it would be Williams who accomplished the most.

"This kid has so much talent, it's incredible," DiBella said of Williams a week before he met Valenzuela. "People are going to say, 'I saw Ricky Williams when …'"

The Williams corner goes to work on their exhausted fighter. Adviser Lou DiBella (top right) intends to move Williams away from the comfort of his hometown of Cincinnati, instead sending him to "boot camp" with Hall of Fame trainer Emanuel Steward at the Kronk Gym in Detroit.

The fight with Rubio was to be a big one for Williams, in that he would be fighting before a national television audience against the guy who had shockingly beaten Bojado a year earlier. But Rubio wasn't a real contender. He was still a light hitter with a lot of losses on his record. It was, plain and simple, a showcase.

When the retina problem was discovered, Williams was hardly fazed. He hadn't heard of Valenzuela and didn't seem particularly interested in learning much about him.

"I have to do my thing," Williams said. "This [getting a new opponent at the last minute] isn't a big deal. I have to fight my fight."

Williams, though, didn't prepare to fight his fight. As he has done throughout his professional career, Williams took a lackadaisical approach to his training. He came in at 144 pounds and appeared soft in the middle.

"If the kid has a problem," DiBella said, "it's that he likes to eat and his mom's a good cook. How many of us don't have that problem?"

Lou DiBella's Challenge To Ricardo Williams Jr.:

"IT'S TIME TO BE A MAN"

For all his speed and skill, Williams couldn't find a way to cope with Juan Valenzuela's pressure. It was clear after just a couple of rounds that Williams was in for a long night.

Last-minute sub Valenzuela made good use of the left uppercut on his way to scoring a major upset over Williams at Caesars Palace in Las Vegas in February. In a highly entertaining fight, Valenzuela outhustled the undertrained 2000 Olympic silver medalist and captured a unanimous decision.

But not many of us have to make weight, something Williams hasn't been able to do. He's only been 140 pounds or less in four of his 10 fights, and against Terronn Millett, he didn't even bother to try to make it. He paid Millett in order to be able to come in over the contract weight.

Williams' wondrous natural talents allowed him to get by without being in the best of condition in all of his prior fights, but Valenzuela wouldn't stand for that.

Valenzuela, 16-6 (6), has had some high moments in his career—he knocked out Julio Diaz in the first round on April 26, 2002—but at other times he has been a journeyman.

"He's going to come in and make you work," said Guilty Boxing matchmaker Brad Goodman, who frequently books Valenzuela. "He won't let you coast. He comes to fight."

Williams, 8-1 (5) with 1 no-contest, found that out early. Valenzuela set a crisp pace from the start and forced the soft Williams to try to match it. That Williams showed heart is undeniable—he battled fiercely from bell to bell—but he didn't have the pop in his hands nor the gas in his tank to match Valenzuela.

Valenzuela showed he wouldn't be intimidated in the opening seconds, nailing Williams with a straight right that seemed to raise a smile on Williams' face. Valenzuela didn't admire his work, coming back with a combination to the body and then a hook to the ribs and a hook to the head that got Williams' attention.

"He's a great fighter, but you can't fight afraid," Valenzuela said. "I always work and stay in shape in case something comes up. So I was ready and I knew it would be a chance for me to show something."

Williams could never mount a rally to turn the tide. Valenzuela methodically won rounds by landing the cleaner and crisper punches in what turned out to be a surprisingly entertaining fight. Valenzuela seemed to have one motto—throw as many punches as possible from as many angles as possible—and Williams simply couldn't match him. Valenzuela captured a decision by scores of 98-92 and 97-93 (twice).

"He came to fight and he fought hard," Williams said. "I've got to go back to the gym and make this right. I have to work hard and get going."

Little did Williams know how prophetic that statement was. DiBella said after the fight that he had hired Emanuel Steward to take over for Williams' father, Ricardo Sr., as the primary trainer. And, more importantly, he was going to leave the comfort of his home in Cincinnati to train in the dangerous environs of Steward's fabled Kronk Gym.

Teddy Atlas, the noted trainer and ESPN2 boxing analyst, said it is exactly what Williams needs to reach his potential.

"Sometimes, a kid like that will think he's working hard when he's really not," Atlas said. "But he's going to have people around him up there who will push him every day."

They will be led by Steward, who said he has two goals with Williams: to get him into better shape and to make him a better puncher. Steward, though, said he's not sure if

Williams will pass the test he's sure to face.

"For his sake, I hope he knows what it means to go to war, because when you come up to Kronk, that means war," Steward said. "I'll be honest with you: He might not make it. He's trained at a level where he was the king and he did what he wants.

"At Kronk, he's not going to be too much of an important person. This Olympic bulls___, no one is going to be impressed by that. He's going to have some guys in his face who will test him. And not just on the first day. Every day."

That is fine with DiBella, who said there is nothing really wrong with Williams that a little tough love couldn't fix.

"It's time to be a man, and he's going to boot camp," DiBella said. "That's what he needs. He needs to get in a situation where he's not the man and where he's not getting respect. That's only going to make him better."

King pointed that out minutes after Valenzuela's stunning upset was announced. King told Williams there is no shame in losing and pointed out how few Hall of Famers ever left with unblemished records. And he said there was no shame in losing to a humble Mexican whose nickname, "Pollo," means "Chicken." King pointed out that Valenzuela was no chicken on this night.

"I do want to pay homage to the Mexicans because Mexicans come to fight," King said. "Viva Mexico! There's one thing you know when you see a Mexican standing on the other side of the ring: Get ready, because you know you are going to have to get down.

"Lou DiBella's going to have to dust this kid off and he'll be fine. He showed me a lot. Muhammad Ali, Joe Frazier, George Foreman, all of them lost and they all came back. It's nothing he can't overcome."

Steward said he decided to take on Williams because of his friendship with DiBella. But he said he told DiBella he wasn't going to be easy on Williams and would throw Williams to the wolves right away.

That was fine with DiBella, who believes the atmosphere will open Williams' eyes and bring out the best in him.

"He's trained with a comfort level that he won't be able to do anymore," Steward said. "Lou wanted a boot camp, so he'll get a boot camp. I don't really have to do nothing different but throw him out there, because that's what we get every day. He's going to have kids trying to knock his damn head off—and some of these kids, they just might do it. He's got to realize that. We'll see how he responds. He's got great potential, but he's not the king no more."

On this night, it was the chicken who was the king. Valenzuela, who has fought mostly at lightweight as a pro, had to pick up about 10 pounds to reach Williams' weight. But he never once considered turning down the

Valenzuela connects with a long right hand, something he was able to do with regularity throughout the fight. In the ninth round, the Mexican unleashed a furious barrage and seemed just a few punches away from scoring a stoppage victory, but Williams survived.

Williams showed a good chin and plenty of heart against Valenzuela, and actually came back and fought well in the 10th and final round. But it was much too late to change the outcome, as "Slick Ricky" suffered his first defeat.

"El Pollo" celebrates as the decision in his favor is announced. After losing his previous two fights, Valenzuela now finds himself in the unlikely position of being courted by Don King.

fight, and was all smiles afterward because of his courage.

"I had it in my heart and in my mind that this would be my day," Valenzuela said. "This is the kind of fight that I needed. I knew from before that he is very good, but I had in my mind and I had in my heart that no matter what, I was coming to win this fight.

"Williams started very good and was moving around early and that made the fight complicated. But we were fighting with a lot at stake on HBO, and I knew that if I kept the pressure on him, I would be able to do it. Boxing is a sport where you have to have heart and I showed that I have the heart."

And because of that heart, he had a new contract in his hand. And Williams learned a lesson that he hopes will pay off down the road.

"This isn't what I wanted," he said solemnly, "but it won't mean that much if I don't let it. I have to make it insignificant. I have to come back and be better than ever. I know I will do that.

"If I do, this night could turn out to be a good one for me. It's up to me and I'm determined to get back in the gym and get it right." ■

Kevin Iole covers boxing for the Las Vegas Review-Journal and is a regular contributor to this magazine.

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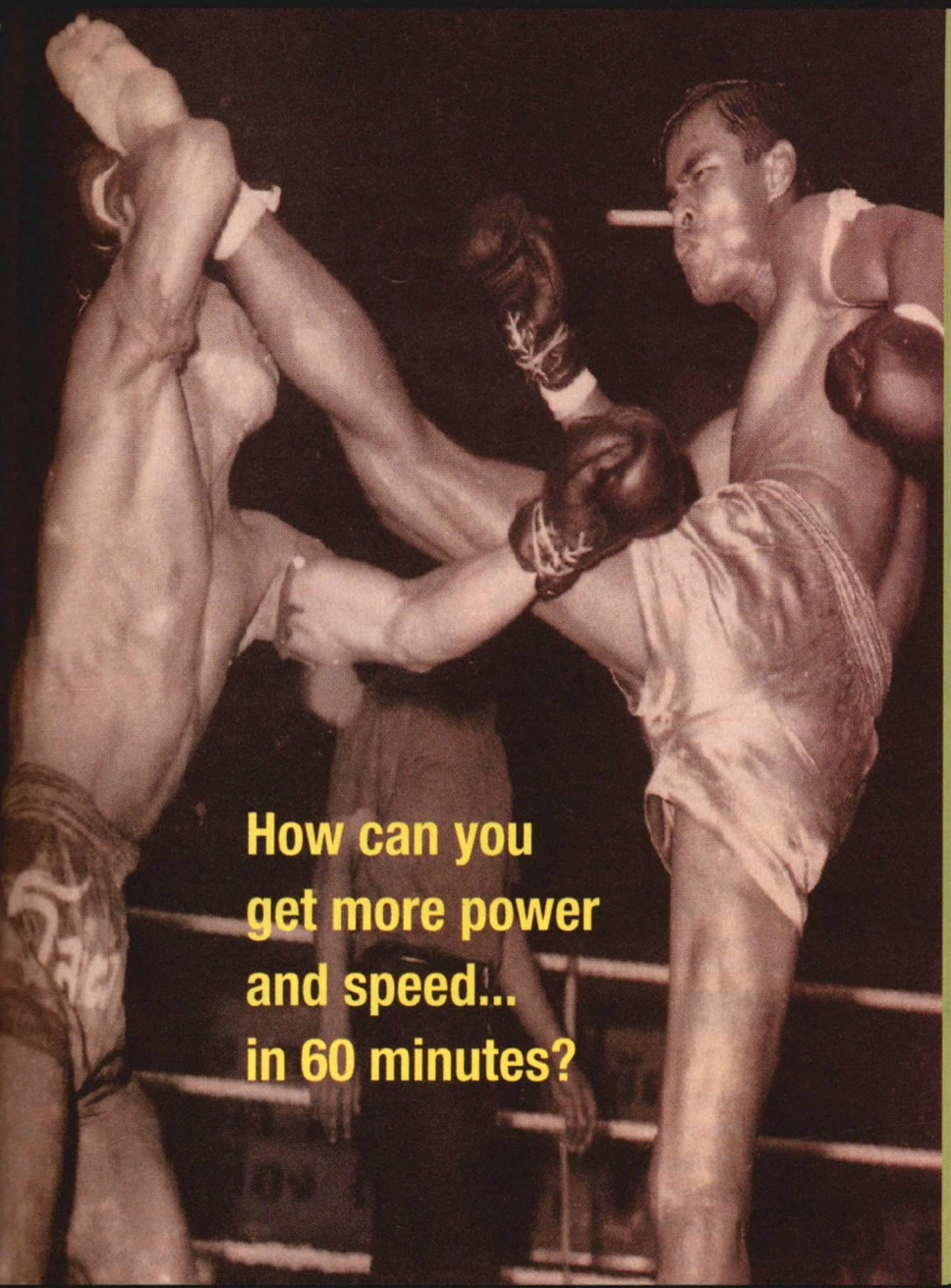

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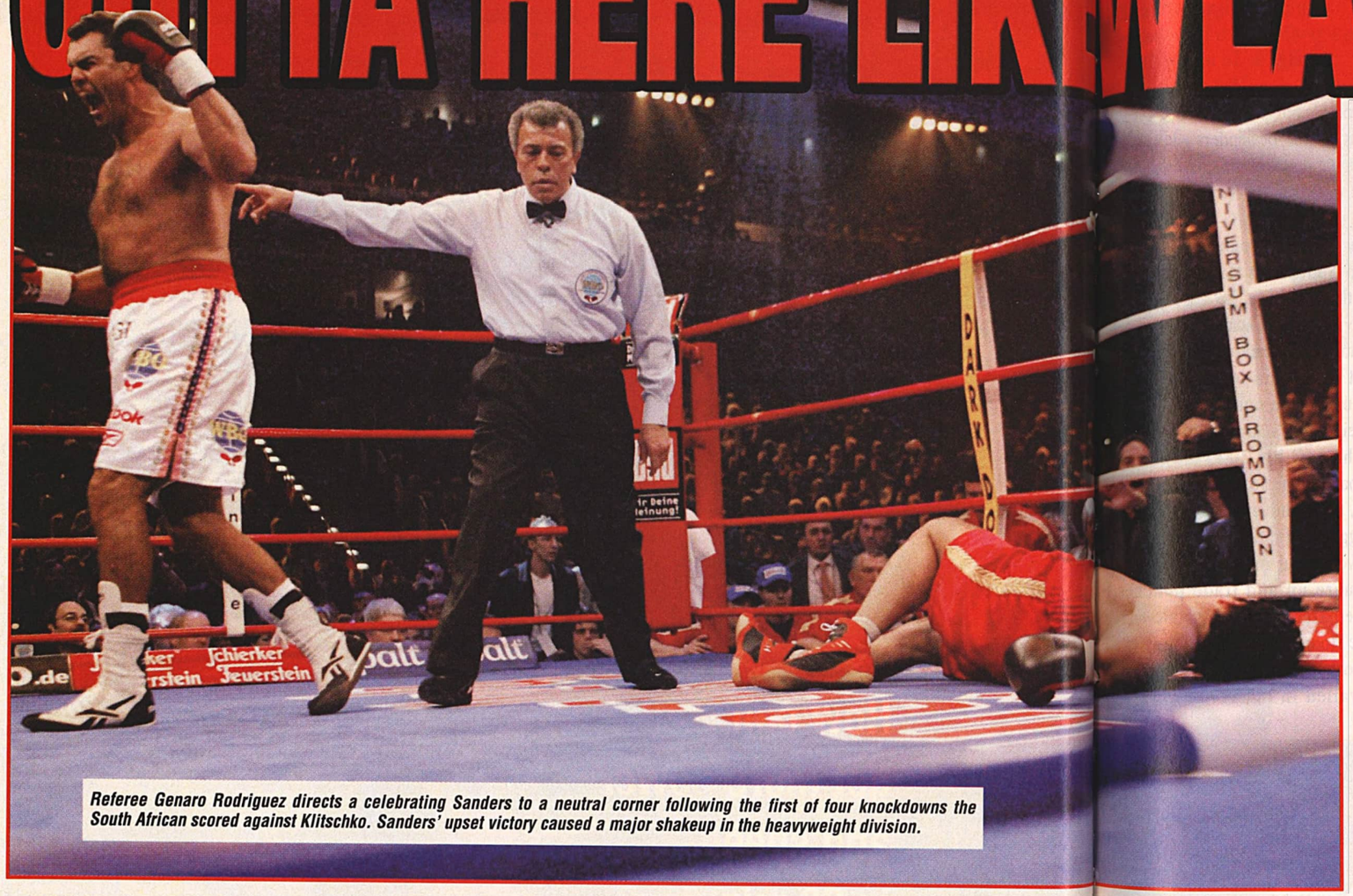


Referee Genaro Rodriguez directs a celebrating Sanders to a neutral corner following the first of four knockdowns the South African scored against Klitschko. Sanders' upset victory caused a major shakeup in the heavyweight division.

Sanders Scrambles Klitschko And The Heavyweight Rankings

By Nigel Collins

PHOTOS BY HOLLY STEIN/HBO

The final left hand from Corrie Sanders not only ended Wladimir Klitschko's status as the would-be savior of boxing, it also provided an emphatic punctuation mark to one of the wildest weeks in recent heavyweight history.

Seven days before Klitschko crumbled at the hands of the South African southpaw, light heavyweight champion Roy Jones outpointed John Ruiz, proving to a new generation that you don't have to be a giant to compete successfully in the sport's glamour division.

The game was still reverberating from Jones' entry into the heavyweight sweepstakes when the second punch of the scene-changing combination rocked the boxing world. Together, these two events have scrambled the heavyweight hierarchy and sent even the wisest pundits scurrying in search of an answer to the age-old question: What the hell is going on here?

It would have been different if it had been heavyweight champion Lennox Lewis who exposed Klitschko as just another pretender. But *Corrie Sanders*? The same Corrie Sanders who had fought just three times in the last three years and was stopped by Hasim Rahman in his last major match.

Besides, wasn't the Sanders bout just a way for Klitschko to mark time until Lewis decided to either fight him or retire? And wasn't Klitschko supposed to be the embodiment of the new super-sized heavyweights, the sort of anatomical wonder that will dominate the sport in the 21st century? Moreover, hadn't HBO just signed Klitschko to a new nine-fight, multimillion-dollar deal?

Let's not kid ourselves; it was easy to get excited about Klitschko. He not only looks like a comic book hero come to life, he's intelligent, charming, and apparently has European women attending his fights in unprecedented numbers. Except for the Schwarzenegger-esque accent, he brings many of the same attributes to the heavyweight division that have made Oscar De La Hoya such a marketing marvel among lighter-weight fighters.

But even Klitschko's detractors didn't think Sanders would be the one to unmask him. Going into the fight, Sanders was considering giving up boxing to become a professional golfer. But after 3 minutes 27 seconds of teeing off against the Ukrainian *Ubermensch*, Sanders' second career was on hold, while Klitschko looked like he'd been whacked in the head with a nine-iron and run over by a golf cart.

Klitschko's monumental hiccup caught most of the boxing world off-guard, but in the brilliant light of hindsight, it's easy to see that it shouldn't have been totally unexpected. Trialhorse Ross Puritty, the only man to previously defeat him as a pro, actually told us all we really need to know about Klitschko—you don't need to be a great fighter to beat him.

Yet subsequent victories over Chris Byrd and Jameel McCline made it easy to write off the Puritty loss as an accident. But when you get right down to it, Byrd can't punch and McCline was practically paralyzed with fear. Sanders, on the other hand, had the punch required to do the job and wasn't afraid to take the risks necessary to deliver it. Put it all together and you have the biggest heavyweight upset since Hasim Rahman iced Lewis in April 2001.

You can't blame Klitschko's management for selecting Sanders. After all, the 37-year-old had been basically a part-time fighter the past few years, spending far more time on the golf course than in the gym. That he was left-handed didn't figure to be too big of an obstacle. If Klitschko was the heir apparent to Lewis, he should have been able to handle Sanders without too much trouble.

But Sanders' southpaw stance ultimately played a noteworthy role in Klitschko's downfall, for it was the left hand, Sanders' power hand, that did the vast majority of the damage. Klitschko didn't seem to see it coming, and after first sampling it midway into the first round, clearly didn't know how to adjust.

As Hall of Fame trainer Gil Clancy observed in the May 2003 issue of THE RING EXTRA, Klitschko is "too mechanical." He's learned to do what his trainers have taught him with a certain amount of athletic grace, but he is not an instinctive fighter. When things take an unexpected turn, as they surely did against Sanders, Klitschko is unable to improvise. He's like a classically trained musician who can hit every note in a symphony score, but is out of his element jamming with a jazz band.

Things started to unravel for Klitschko fairly early. He took the fight to the backpedaling Sanders, and when the South African tried to jump in with a lunging blow, Klitschko pulled him up short with a thudding left jab. Encouraged, Klitschko lunged with a hook, but Sanders fired back with a left of his own, snapping Klitschko's head back. The underdog followed with another left, and Klitschko quickly tied him up. It was the first clear sign that Sanders had the power to hurt him, and Klitschko's brow furrowed beneath the bangs of his new hairdo.

Sanders wasted no time pressing his advantage, and soon connected with a crippling left to Klitschko's head. When the stunned fighter reached out desperately to grab his tormentor, Sanders connected with a short, chopping hook to Klitschko's temple.

As a gasp of horror went up from the capacity crowd of 11,500 at the Preussag Arena, Klitschko crashed backward onto the canvas, coming to rest near the ropes. It looked momentarily like he might not beat referee Genaro Rodriguez' count, but he gamely lurched upright at eight, blood trickling from a cut over his left eye, and was allowed to continue.

Sanders, who shaved off his mustache before the fight in an attempt to change his look and luck, was on him in a flash. Two

Klitschko couldn't get out of the way of the southpaw Sanders' laser-quick left hand, and was tagged repeatedly with the potent punch. He admitted afterward that he'd never been hit so hard before in either the amateur or professional ranks.

more whistling lefts slammed into the target, and Klitschko fell face-first, his knees on the canvas, his rump sticking up in the air. Again, he beat the count, but the round was almost over, and Sanders only had time to put across one more left before the bell.

Although Klitschko wobbled slightly on his way back to his corner, he appeared clear-eyed and alert during the rest period. But no sooner did the bell ring to start the second than Sanders was in his face again, gunning for the finish. Another left, this one straight to the point of the chin, put Klitschko down a third time just 10 seconds into the round.

Vitali Klitschko was on his feet, just below the ring steps, an anxiety riddled bundle of nerves, squirming in his own private agony as his little brother groped his way back to his feet still again.

You had to admire Klitschko's guts, but Sanders was in no mood for mercy. He charged in with a final left to the head, and when Klitschko fell for the fourth time, Rodriguez waved the fight over 27 seconds into the round.

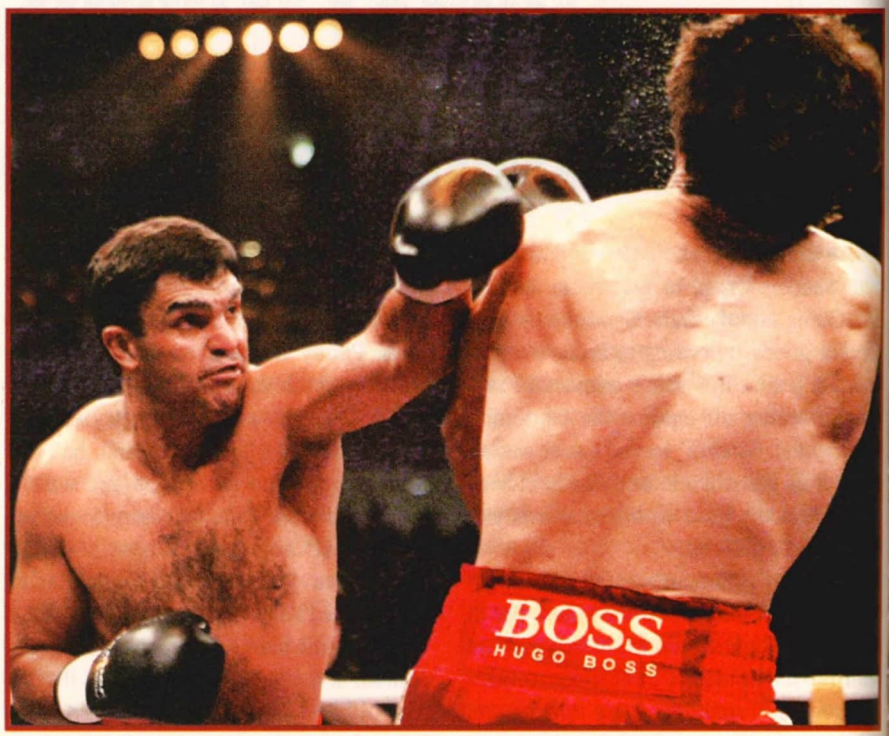
"I gave myself big chance of winning," said Sanders. "I knew I could do it."

While Sanders' upset victory has positioned him to fight anybody in the division, including Lewis, whether or not Lewis condescends to defend against him is another matter all together. The heavyweight champion has been vacillating ever since he knocked out Mike Tyson last June, and as we went to press, there was still no clear indication of his next move.

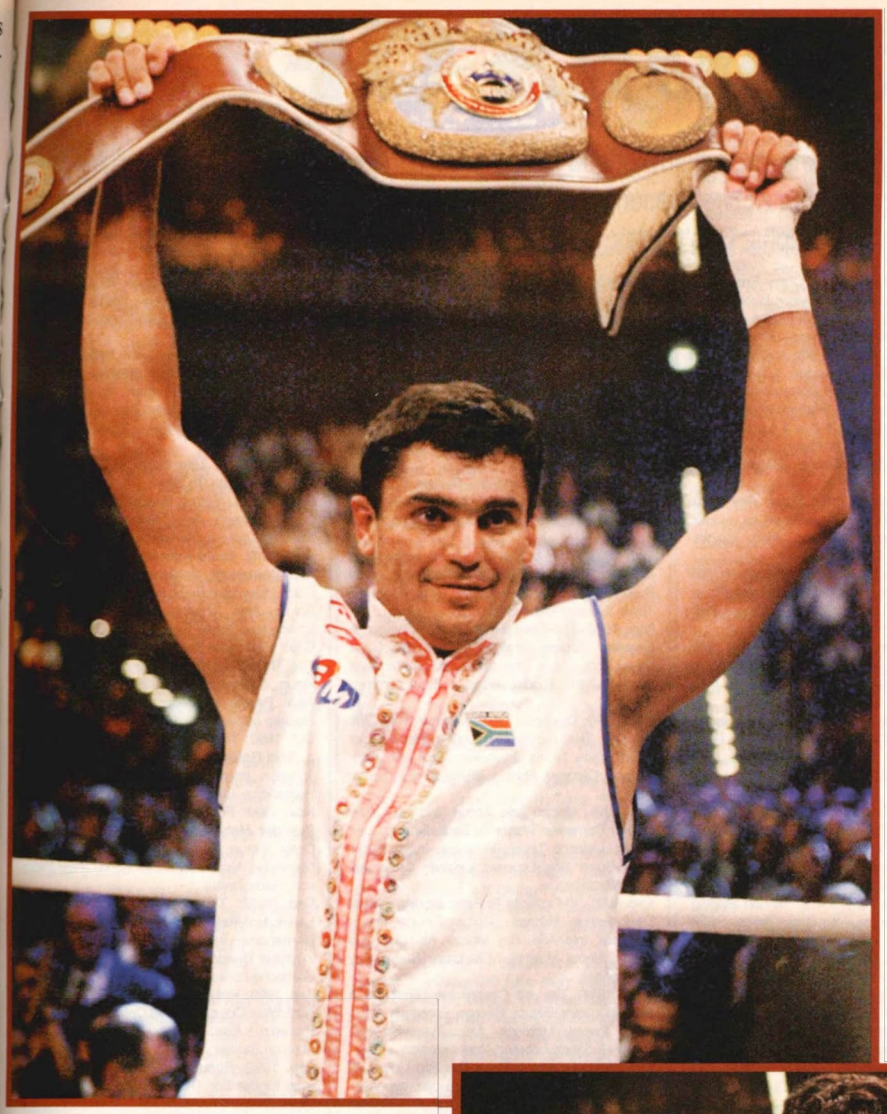
Sanders did tell HBO's Larry Merchant that Lewis had phoned him before the Klitschko fight to offer words of encouragement and a little advice. So maybe Lewis, who maintained all along that neither of the Klitschko brothers presented much of a challenge for him, will fight Sanders while waiting for Tyson to prop up his credibility and confidence with one or two more Cliff Etienne-type wins.

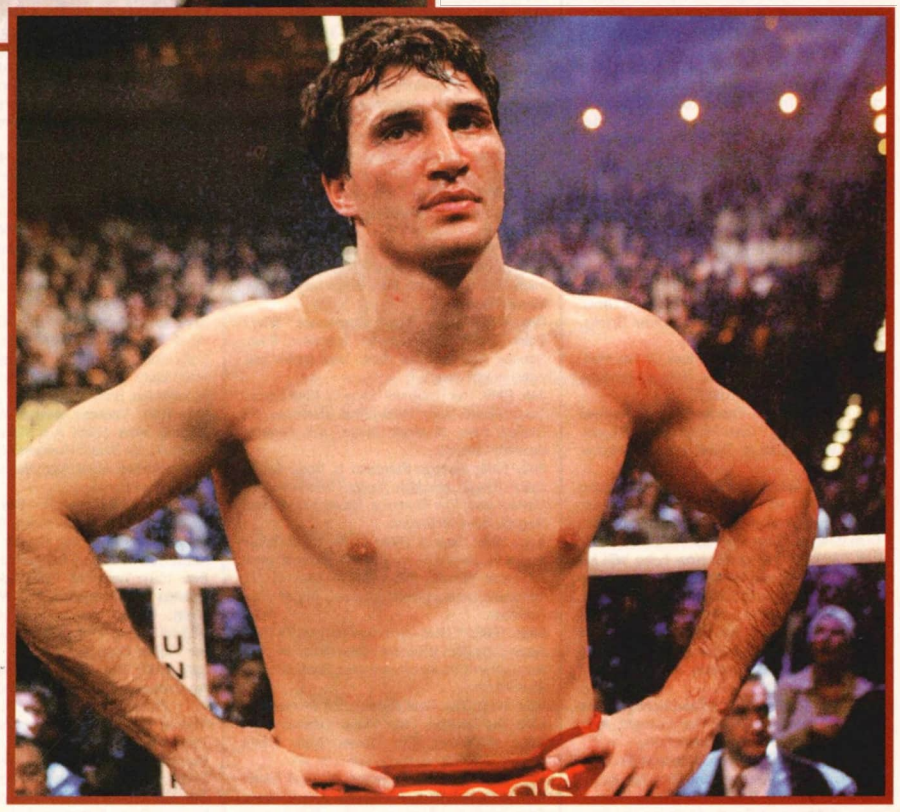
But how much we can realistically expect from Sanders at this point in his career? On the plus side, he's a relatively fresh 37, having fought sparingly in recent years. But more significantly, he can fire the counter left out of his southpaw stance fiendishly quick, with enough pop to hurt any heavyweight. He's also fun to watch, as anybody who saw his 2000 brawl with Hasim Rahman will recall.

Actually, the Rahman fight highlighted Sanders' biggest deficit. Although capable of productive lateral movement, Sanders likes to square up and trade punches, which can be hazardous when you have an iffy chin. He floored Rahman and hurt him on several other occasions before "The Rock" prevailed in the seventh round.



The 37-year-old Sanders was relentless in his pursuit of Klitschko, and once he hurt him late in the first round, he didn't let up until the fight was stopped. The sensational victory has thrust Sanders into the thick of the heavyweight title picture.





While Sanders (above) has resurrected his dormant career and now looks forward to more big paydays and maybe a shot at world champion Lennox Lewis, Klitschko (right) is left to ponder what went wrong. He wants a quick rematch, but would that be wise?

thanks in large part to a better beard.

Still, Sanders came into the Klitschko fight with a what-have-I-got-to-lose attitude that served him well, and if he maintains that kind of mindset, he could do some more damage before trading in his gloves for a golf bag.

"As long as I keep on winning and doing well, I'm going to keep fighting," said Sanders on his return to South Africa. "I'm very happy about it. It's time to make a bit of money and see what else I can get out of boxing."

How much more Klitschko, 40-2 (37), can get out of boxing is just as problematical, if not more so. In the first blush of defeat, he insisted on an immediate rematch.

"Now we'll see what he's made of," HBO Sports President Ross Greenburg told the New York *Daily News*. "If he can't beat Corrie Sanders a second time, then maybe he should be taking his Ph.D and getting into another line of work."

Perhaps Dr. Klitschko should consider a more gradual revival before jumping right back in with Sanders again. Michael Grant—like Klitschko, once considered the heavyweight of the future—is still trying to recover from his brutal dismissal at the hands of Lewis, and that was three years ago.

But maybe it doesn't really matter in the long run. The secret is out now: Klitschko will fold when confronted by a good puncher who's not afraid to let 'em rip. It's going to take a lot more than beating Sanders in a rematch, if indeed he can, to make us forget the sight of Klitschko's enormous body hitting the floor almost every time a clean punch connected.

When Klitschko and his brother, Vitali, first began to climb the heavyweight rankings, they were frequently compared to that colossus of a previous era, Primo Carnera. Some felt that was unfair, but following the Sanders debacle, it's an assessment that can no longer be disregarded. How do you say "timber" in Ukrainian? ■

BACK ISSUES OF KO

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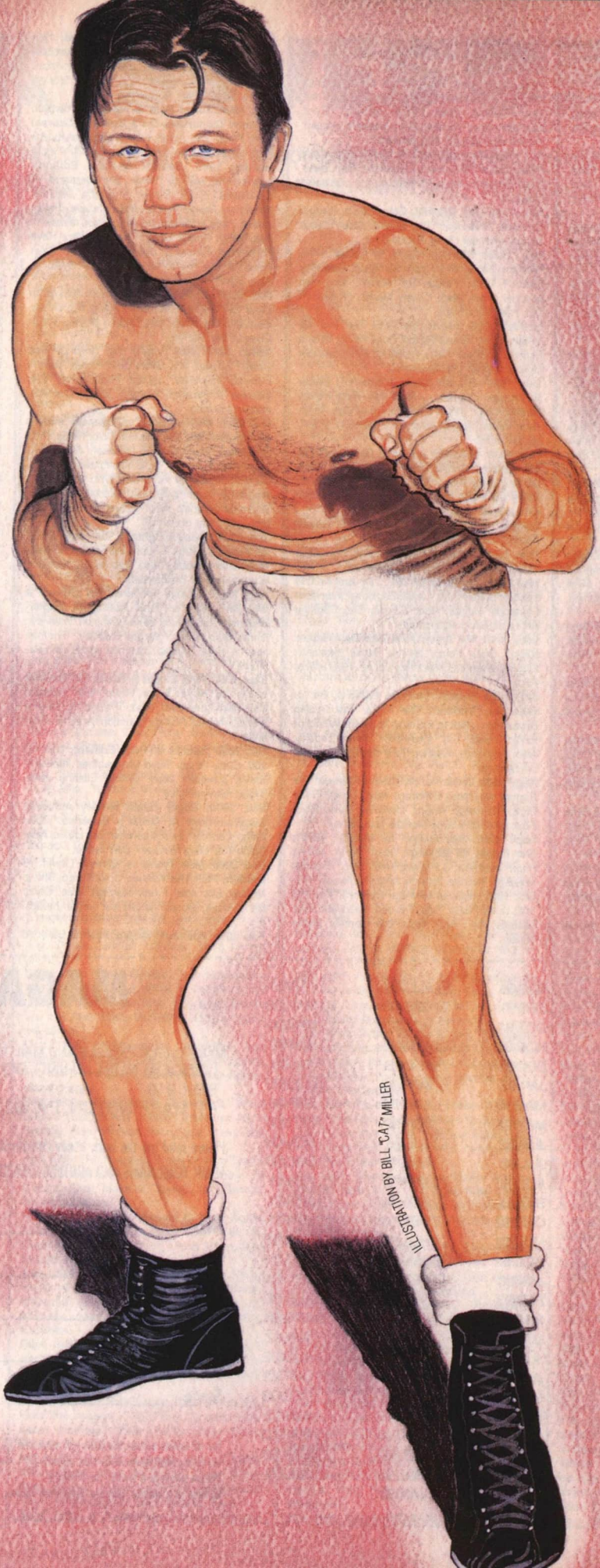
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HALL OF FAMER

TONY ZALE

Beyond The Graziano Trilogy

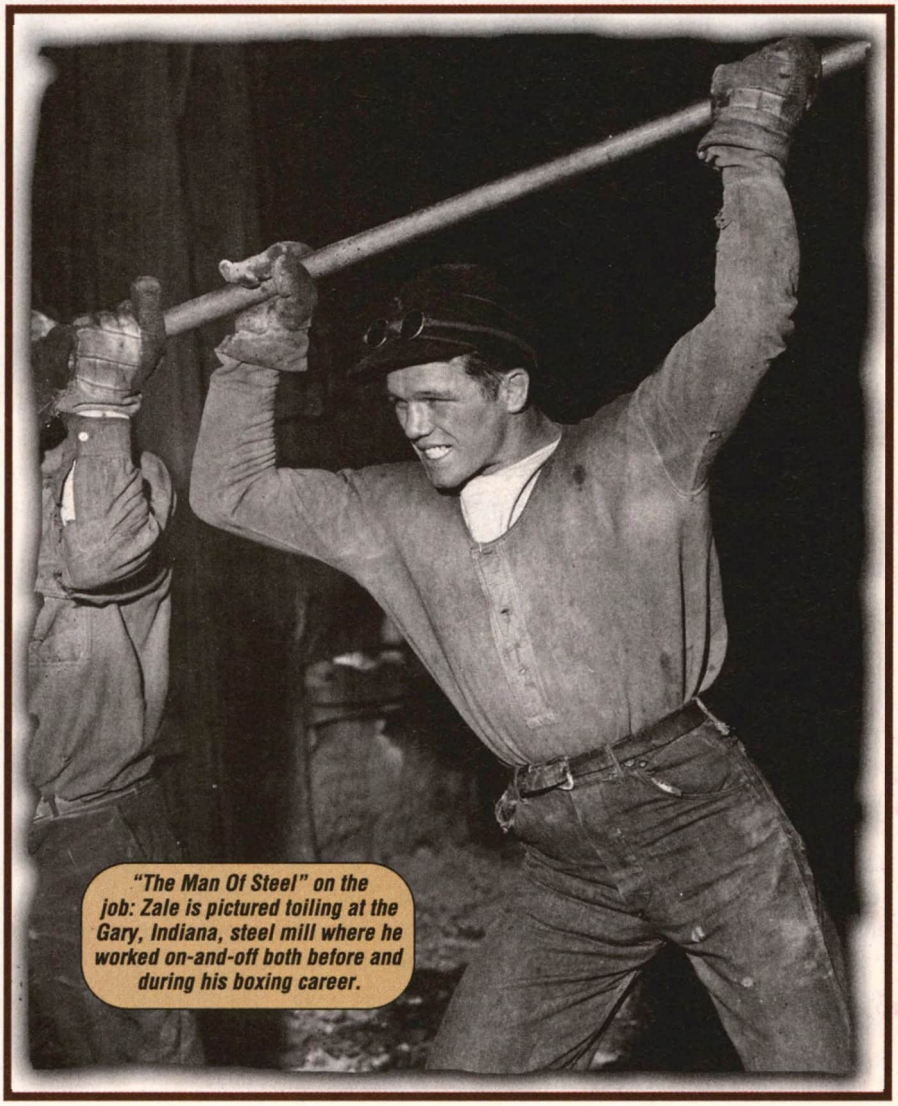
By Robert Cassidy

No one is quite sure of the origin of Tony Zale's nickname—"The Man Of Steel." Whether it was because he hailed from Gary, Indiana, once one of America's largest steel producing cities, or because sportswriters viewed him as difficult to break as a chunk of steel almost doesn't matter.

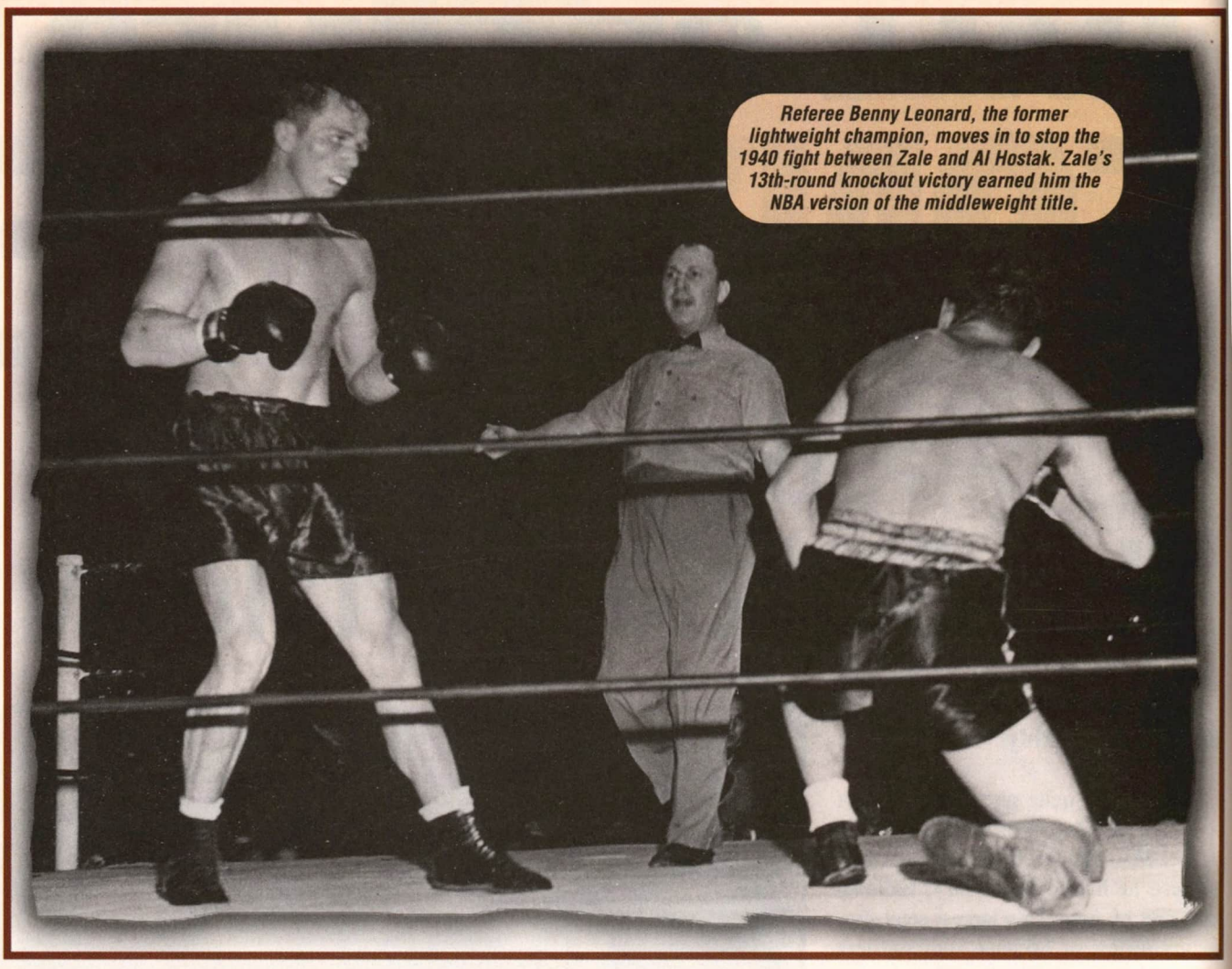
Both are appropriate.

Zale grew up in Gary and even worked for a time in the city's steel mills. Yet he also lived up to the nickname in the sense that he possessed an unyielding spirit inside the ring. Over the course of an 87-bout pro career, it was Zale's power and ability to endure punishment that made him a champion. He may have been The Man Of Steel, but his heart and fists were worth their weight in gold.

Zale held the middleweight title twice and reigned for nearly an entire decade. Yet he is best known for his three-fight series with Rocky Graziano, a savage trilogy that ranks among the fiercest rivalries in the history of boxing. While Zale, who won the first and third bouts, is forever linked with Graziano, there was much more to his career than those three epic bouts. If anything, the Graziano fights were a microcosm of the man's career and life.



"The Man Of Steel" on the job: Zale is pictured toiling at the Gary, Indiana, steel mill where he worked on-and-off both before and during his boxing career.



Referee Benny Leonard, the former lightweight champion, moves in to stop the 1940 fight between Zale and Al Hostak. Zale's 13th-round knockout victory earned him the NBA version of the middleweight title.

Zale's father died in 1914, a year after the fighter was born. It was a hardscrabble existence for the family. Zale had two sisters and four brothers, and all the males, like their father, had worked in the steel mills at one time or another. The other constant in the family was boxing. All of the brothers fought as amateurs in programs associated with the Catholic Church, but only Tony pursued a career in the ring. He turned pro while still a student at Froebel High School.

The young fighter was strong but crude. Without proper management or training, he was beaten nine times in his first 26 fights. Disgusted with boxing, Zale fought just once from July 1935 to July 1937, opting to head back to the steel mills of Gary for an honest day's work.

But Zale would soon be discovered by managers Sam Pian and Art Winch, the duo who once guided the career of Barney Ross. Along with new management came a new outlook on boxing.

Zale's breakthrough fight was a 10-round non-title victory over NBA middleweight champion Al Hostak in January 1940. A rematch was scheduled for six months later in Hostak's hometown of Seattle, Washington, with the title on the line.

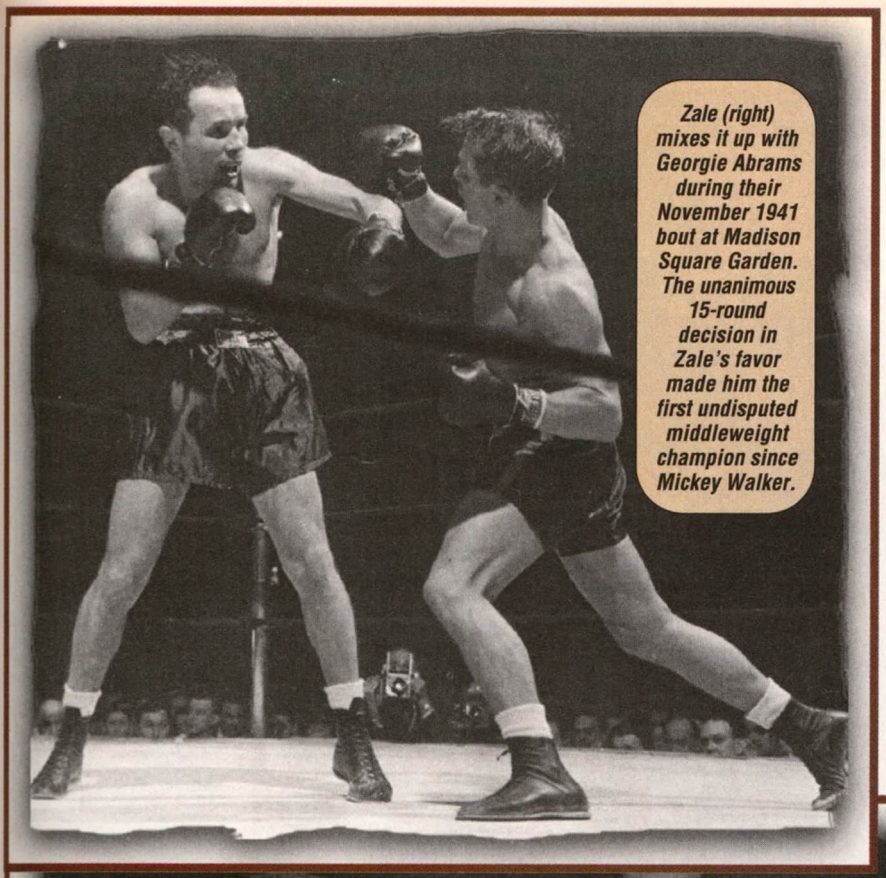
Zale rarely took a backward step in the contest, suffocating Hostak with pressure. Right hands to the body dropped Hostak in the 12th and 13th rounds. When the champion rose after the second knockdown, a flurry of powerpunches spilled Hostak to the canvas once again. Referee Benny Leonard, the former lightweight champion, stopped the fight.

"You're going to be a champion for a long time," Hostak said to Zale after the bout. "You hit like the devil, and I just couldn't take 'em."

Zale fought again a month later and it was a good thing the title wasn't at stake because he would have made a liar out of Hostak. In a non-title bout in Chicago, Zale was handily outboxed over 10 rounds by future champ Billy Soose. It became clear that Zale was vulnerable to superior boxers, and he would suffer a similar setback to the stylish Billy Conn later in his career.

The new champion was not particularly gifted with hand speed or grace. He often telegraphed his punches, and his defense was virtually non-existent. Even his chin was suspect. He was dropped in the first and third Hostak fights and twice against Graziano. What Zale did have, though, was punching power and an astonishing ability to quickly recuperate from punishment. So what if Zale visited the canvas; keeping him there was another thing all together.

Zale was a workingman's fighter who entered the ring planning on a full night's work. He approached boxing with the same monotonous yet dogged determination that was typical of his days laboring in Gary's steel mills. Back then, he grimly packed his lunch pail, donned his hard hat,



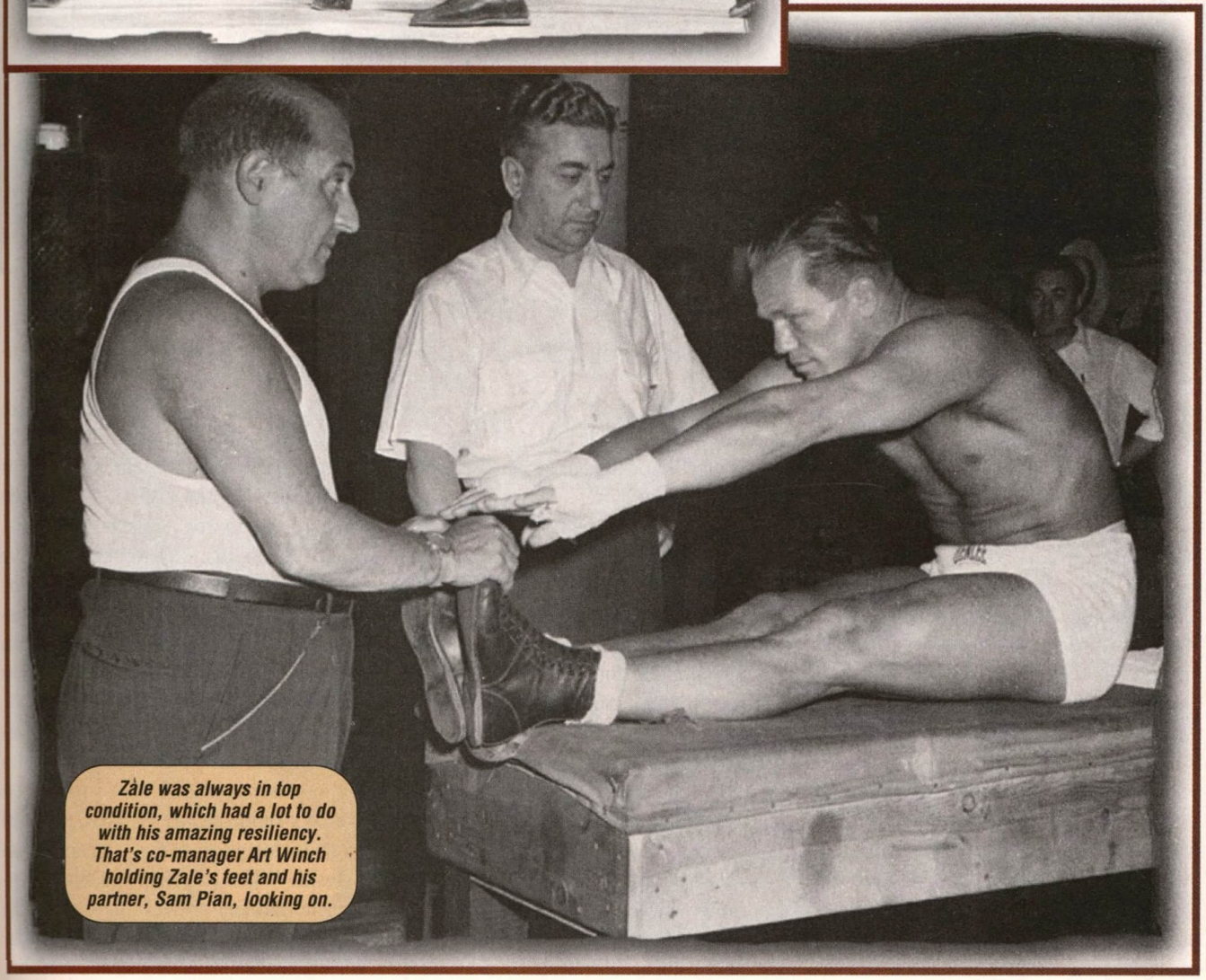
Zale (right) mixes it up with Georgie Abrams during their November 1941 bout at Madison Square Garden. The unanimous 15-round decision in Zale's favor made him the first undisputed middleweight champion since Mickey Walker.

and worked and worked and worked until they told him to go home.

Boxing was no different. Zale conditioned himself to fight 15 rounds, at a brutal pace if need be. He threw punches, caught punches, and fought and fought and fought until the last bell rang or the referee intervened. There were times, particularly against Graziano, during which he managed to squeeze a full night's work into six rounds, blistering opponents with raw power.

The legendary sportswriter Frank Graham once wrote of Zale, "There is something absolutely primitive about him in the ring. He has the round head and flat face of a man who was born to fight—to inflict punishment and absorb it without complaint. He looks somehow like some ancient warrior come back through the years."

Zale was a quiet, humble man away from the ring. When he was named



Zale was always in top condition, which had a lot to do with his amazing resiliency. That's co-manager Art Winch holding Zale's feet and his partner, Sam Pian, looking on.

Pian and Winch help Zale hang up his gloves in 1949. Zale had lost the title to Marcel Cerdan the previous year, and although he toyed with the idea of a rematch, he finally decided that his best days were past.

Fighter of the Year in 1946 and was invited to New York City for a celebratory dinner, he did not attend the theater or visit a nightclub. Instead, he spent his days training at Stillman's Gym and his evenings in his hotel room. But the man in the ring was in stark contrast from the introverted steel worker.

Zale defended the NBA title twice in 1941, stopping Steve Mamakos in 14 and Hostak in two. By the end of the year he signed for a unification bout against Georgie Abrams, who was recognized as champion by the New York State Athletic Commission.

The bout took place on November 28 at Madison Square Garden and started with The Man Of Steel on the canvas. A left hook from Abrams, an 8-5 favorite, dropped Zale for a nine-count in the opening round. Perhaps Zale needed the sense of urgency to compete, because after the first stanza, Zale put forth a relentless attack.

Once again, it was Zale's work to the body that won him the fight. Undeterred by the early knockdown, he pounded away at the body, keeping the fight at close quarters, ignoring the fact that it left him vulnerable for another left hook.

In the eighth, Zale was hurt badly by a right, and Abrams poured everything he had into finishing the job. It proved futile. By now, nothing could derail Zale. In typical fashion, he came out and won the ninth round. The decision was unanimous, and Zale became the first undisputed middleweight champion since Mickey Walker held the belt a decade earlier.

After the bout, Abrams, red splotches pocking his midsection, said, "He's the best bodypuncher I've ever fought." *The New York Journal American* agreed, declaring Zale, "the most wicked body belter the manly art has seen in a generation."

Once again, after a major victory, Zale would lose a non-title bout. This time, he dropped an over-the-weight match to Billy Conn. Just months before, Conn nearly upset Joe Louis for the heavyweight title. Again, Zale's inability to outduel a boxer was exploited by Conn, who won a unanimous decision. After the bout, Zale enlisted in the Navy as a specialist first class in physical training. His main responsibility was keeping the sailors physically fit.

On the day he enlisted, Zale's unassuming personality made for good copy on the sports pages and also revealed the champ's subtle sense of humor. He signed up under his given name, Anthony Florian Zaleski. When asked to list his occupation, he wrote, "professional boxer." The officer read over the application and said, "A fighter? Well, Tony Zale is enlisting

today. He should be here very soon."

Zale responded: "Really? Now that's one guy I always thought I could beat."

Upon his discharge from the Navy, Zale had a few tuneup fights before the brutal series with Graziano. After that he agreed to meet Marcel Cerdan, a French war hero who dominated the European boxing scene.

While many suspected that Graziano had significantly weakened The Man Of Steel, Cerdan's lack of first-rate opposition gave the media a reason to pick Zale. But most observers who previewed the bout conceded a Cerdan upset would not be shocking.

If Graziano's attack did not take its toll on Zale, then certainly fighting a man with a limited style was not proper preparation against a complete fighter like Cerdan. During the prefight buildup, Lester Bromberg wrote, "Zale has had too much Graziano, a standing target whose only weapon is a wild right."

Most agreed that Zale's best chance for victory was an early knockout. He hadn't fought past six rounds since 1942. Nonetheless, the champion entered the ring at Roosevelt Stadium in Jersey City on September 21, 1948, as a slight 6-5 favorite.

It turned out to be a mismatch. Zale, 35, got old in a hurry. Cerdan set a frenetic pace (a Zale trademark), but the defending champion could not keep up. Cerdan's punches may not have been devastating, but the volume was overwhelming. Still, Zale stood firm and absorbed a protracted beating. Finally, Zale sagged to the canvas after taking a left hook at the close of the 11th round. His handlers helped him back to his corned and stopped the fight.

The Man Of Steel was rusting.

There was a rematch clause for Zale, and he initially sought to exercise that option. "I'm out to regain my title," Zale said when he signed for the return bout. "Physically, I just wasn't there in my last fight with Cerdan, but I'll be there this summer."

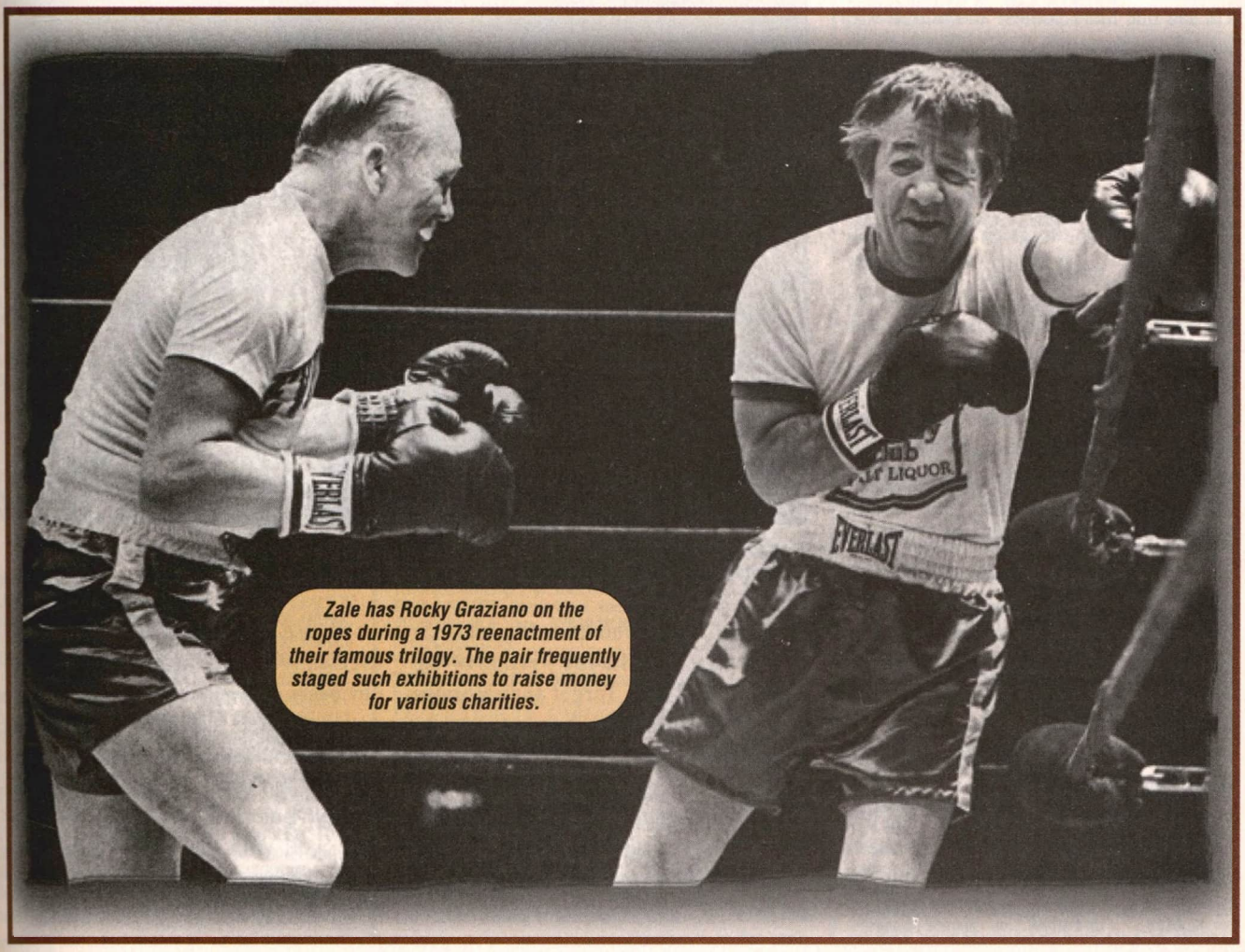
Pian and Winch begged Zale to retire and spend more time with his wife and two daughters. After a month of contemplation, he did just that.

"I realized I've passed my peak," said Zale. "It was to satisfy my pride that I wanted to meet Cerdan again. But now I'm satisfied to rest on my past."

Zale, who tallied an overall record of 67-18-2 (45), didn't know how to quit in a fight, but ultimately he knew when it was time to quit boxing.

Much as he did during his heyday, Zale lived quietly after his retirement from boxing, spending time coaching at the local CYO. He stepped into the ring with Graziano often, staging mock exhibitions of their series for charity. He even portrayed himself in the movie of Graziano's life, *Somebody Up There Likes Me*. Zale would die in 1997 at the age of 83 after a battle with Alzheimer's disease. ■

Robert Cassidy is a former associate editor of this magazine and a regular contributor.



Zale has Rocky Graziano on the ropes during a 1973 reenactment of their famous trilogy. The pair frequently staged such exhibitions to raise money for various charities.

Marquez Brothers

(Continued from page 63)

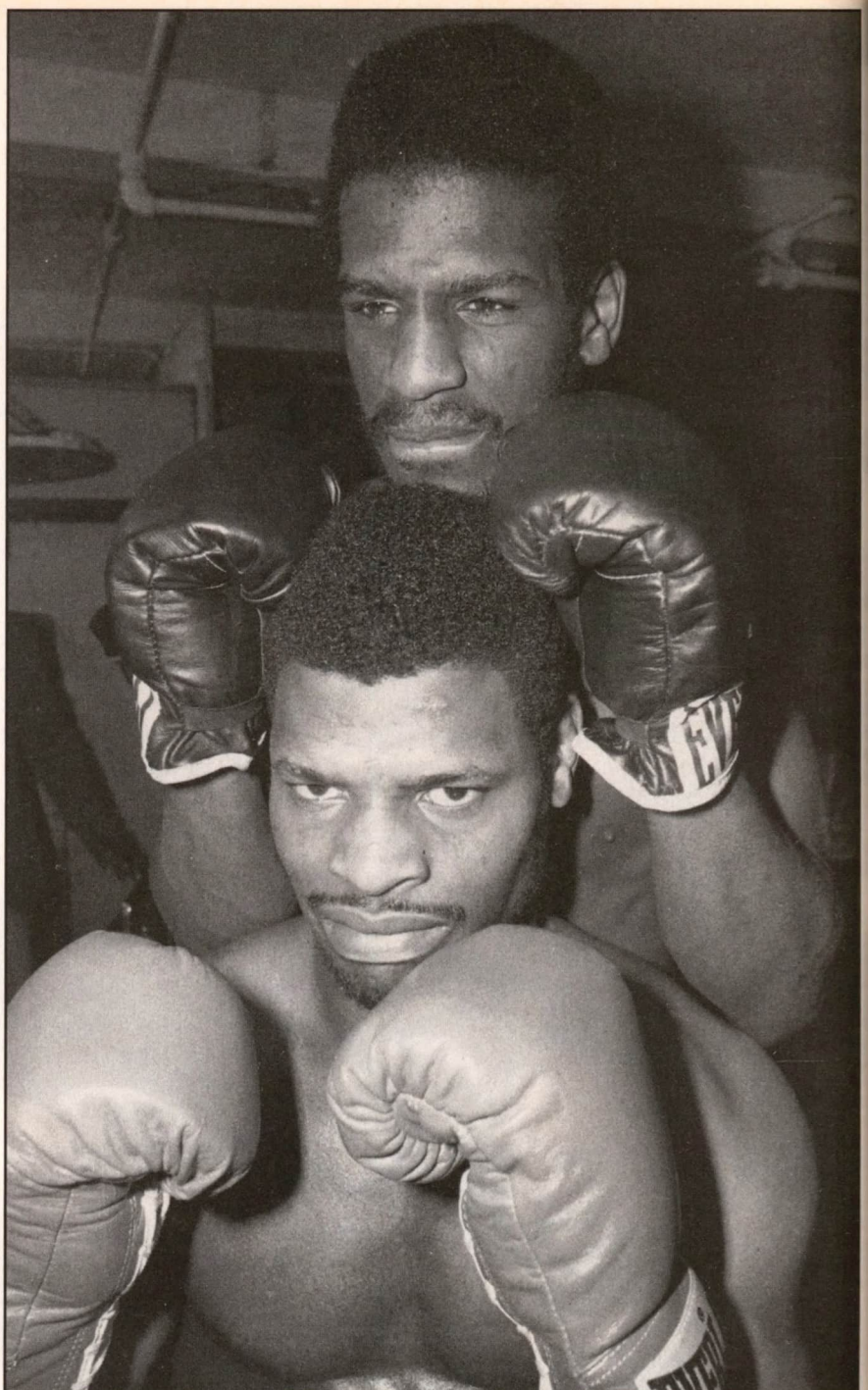
Gabe almost won another title in October '97, but Lady Luck blindsided him again. Just when he seemed about to overpower defending IBF junior lightweight titlist Arturo Gatti, he was caught by a desperation left hook and knocked cold. Sadly, Gabe, 49-6 (26), is still fighting, his skills badly diminished, the ghost of Jimmy Garcia still haunting him.

Things didn't work out much better for Rafael, not in the ring, anyway. After topping Freddie Pendleton for the IBF title, he made a pair of successful defenses and then accepted the challenge of Oscar De La Hoya. It was the biggest payday of Rafael's career, but "The Golden Boy" demolished him in less than two rounds. Rafael got one more shot at the big time, but was thrashed by Kostya Tszyu in an August '98 title eliminator. He had one more contest and retired with a record of 53-4 (42).

With so many alphabet titles available to the highest bidder, even the French got in on the act. Christophe Tiozzo, 33-2 (23), had a short stint as WBA super middleweight titlist. Brother Fabrice, 43-2 (29), won both the WBC light heavyweight and WBA cruiserweight titles. Neither ruled with much distinction, and the details of their undistinguished reigns will add nothing to the discussion.

Based purely on their accomplishments, Michael and Leon Spinks should be considered the greatest pair of championship brothers in history. After all, they both won the heavyweight championship, which alone puts them in a class by themselves. And let's not forget that Michael also had a long, distinguished run as light heavyweight ruler prior to beating Larry Holmes for the heavyweight title, holding first the WBA version of the 175-pound crown and then unifying the title by outpointing WBC beltholder Dwight Muhammad Qawi in March '83.

Yes, "Neon Leon," 26-17-3 (14), flamed out quickly, but he's still one of only five men to beat Ali. The Spinkses are also the only brothers besides the Attells to both win legitimate world championships. Those who think Michael, 31-1 (21), only held the IBF version of the heavyweight title forget that Holmes was unbeaten and the linear champion when Spinks decisioned him in September '85.



Michael (top) and Leon Spinks are the only brothers in history to both win the heavyweight championship. Michael was also undisputed light heavyweight champ.

As with everything else, alphabet titles have tainted and skewed the value of what these brothers accomplished. But it's still far from an everyday thing and worthy of note when it occurs.

Where the Marquez brothers will eventually end up in this pecking order obviously depends on what they do from now on. Their size will prevent them from ever winning heavyweight titles or, for that matter, earning heavyweight money. But skill-wise, they match up very well with their predecessors and have a realistic chance of being the best since the Spinks brothers. It all depends on them. ■

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SUMMARY

HEAVYWEIGHTS

Roy Jones W 12 John Ruiz
(Wins WBA Title)
Corrie Sanders KO 2 Wladimir Klitschko
Mike Tyson KO 1 Clifford Etienne
Fres Oquendo KO 10 Maurice Harris
Lamon Brewster KO 3 Joe Lenart
Oleg Maskaev KO 1 Errol Sadikovski
Monte Barrett W 6 Terry Porter
Terrance Lewis D 10 Friday Ahunanya
Sherman Williams W 10 Gabe Brown
Ray Austin D 10 Zuri Lawrence
Al Cole W 8 David Izon
Tony Thompson KO 8 James Gaines
Samuel Peter KO 4 Dale Crowe
Fabrice Tiozzo W 8 George Arias
Jean-Francois Bergeron W 10 Darroll Wilson
Ron Guerrero KO 5 Josue Blocus
Fabio Moli KO 5 Edgar Da Silva
Keith McKnight KO 3 Elvin Evans
Tomasz Bonin KO 2 Leon Nkendzap
Richel Hersisia KO 2 Patriche Costel
Marcelo Dominguez W 10 Miguel Aguirre
Albert Sosnowski KO 2
Mindaugas Kulikauskas
Bob Mirovic KO 5 Auckland Aumatagi
Cyril Seror KO 1 Thierry Guezouli
Lewis Gilbert W Disq. 2 Rafael Pedro
Onebo Maxime W 8 Garing Lane
Chauncy Welliver KO 5 Brad Rone
Thomas Sorensen W 6 Rodney McSwain
Roman Greenberg KO 2 Calvin Miller
Lisandro Diaz KO 2 Kevin Richardson
Vonda Ward W 4 Martha Salazar

CRUISERWEIGHTS

Jean-Marc Mormeck KO 8
Alexander Gurov
(Retains WBA Title)
Wayne Braithwaite KO 4 Ravea Springs
(Retains WBC Title)
Ezra Sellers KO 2 Jason Robinson
Pietro Aurino KO 10 Vincenzo Rossitto
Kelvin Davis KO 1 Rogelio Lobo
Thomas Hansvoll KO 6 Gabor Halasz
Krszystof Wlodarczyk KO 5
Goodman Kwinana
Valery Brudov KO 1 Joe Siluvangi
Tim Flamos W 10 Roy Payne
Jorge Kahwagi KO 1 Alexei Osokin
Chad Van Sickle W 6 Josh Jones

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS

Mehdi Sahnoune KO 7 Bruno Girard
(Wins WBA Title)
George Jones W 12 Rodney Moore
Peter Oboh KO 11 Neil Simpson
Michael Rush W 10 Derrick Whitley
Jackson Chanet KO 3 Yohan Gimenez

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS

Antonio Perugino W 6 Orlando Javier Acuna
Fernando Zuniga KO 9 Pedro Ortega
Andre Thysse W 12 David Starie
Evans Ashira KO 6 Ruben Perez
Brian Magee W 12 Miguel Jimenez
Mario Veit W 8 Ramon Arturo Britez
Jeff Lacy KO 2 James Crawford
Marc Bargero Tech. Draw 6 Shannan Taylor
Victor Oganov KO 5 Artem Solomko
Laila Ali KO 4 Mary Ann Almager

MIDDLEWEIGHTS

Howard Eastman KO 2 Gary Beardsley
Rhoshii Wells KO 4 Leonard Townsend
Derrell Coley W 8 Anthony Ivory
Cristian Sanavia KO 2 Silvio Rojas
Kenny Ellis KO 4 Ron Weaver
Tokutaro Toyozumi W 12 Ian MacLeod
Wayne Elcock W 10 Yuri Tsarenko
Felix Sturm W 10 Javier Mamani
Cleveland Corder W 10 Darrell Sukerow
Robert Dula W 6 Sandro Haro

JUNIOR MIDDLEWEIGHTS

Winky Wright W 12 J.C. Candelo
(Retains IBF Title)
Alex Garcia KO 3 Santiago Samaniego
(Wins WBA Title)
Richard Williams W 12 Andrei Pestriaev
Julio Garcia W 10 Irving Garcia
Michael Rask W 12 Rashid Matumla
Charles Whittaker W 12 Rogelio Martinez
Christophe Canclaux W 10 Azziz Daari
Virgil Kalakoda W 12 Elvis Guerrero
Jeffrey Hill KO 1 Angel Beltre
Marcos Primero KO 4 Dante Craig
Anthony Thompson KO 2 James Buggs
Oscar Diaz W 6 Jose Rodrigues
Guillermo Saputo KO 3 Fray Luis Sierra

WELTERWEIGHTS

Thomas Damgaard W 8 Presento Brito
Antonio Diaz Tech. Draw 2
Edwin Vazquez
Stevie Johnston KO 6 Ever Beleno
Jawaid Khaliq KO 7 Jan Bergman
Jose Rosa Gomez KO 8 Raul Balbi
Juan Valenzuela W 10 Ricardo Williams
Paolo Roberto KO 10 Wayne Martell
Chris Smith KO 10 Sam Garr
Kermit Cintron KO 6 Frankie Sanchez
James Hare KO 1 Frans Hantindi
Giovanni Parisi W 8 Miguel Angel Pena
Antonio Lauri KO 5 Hamid Bouhembel
Sven Paris KO 3 Csaba Balatoni
Christian Bladt KO 5 Leonti Voronchuk
Shuichi Kobayashi W 10 Teruo Nagase
Dewey Welliver W 6 Livingstone Bramble
Ian MacKillop KO 6 Augustine Silva

JUNIOR WELTERWEIGHTS

Victoriano Sosa KO 6 Luis Rafael Sosa
Henry Bruseles W 12 Hicklet Lau
Wilfredo Negron KO 5 Dagoberto Najera
Pablo Sarmiento KO 8 Gary Ryder
Gabriel Mapouka KO 4 Adrian Parlogea
Giuseppe Lauri KO 2 Alan Sebire
Ernesto Zavala Tech. Win 5 Pedro Garcia
Darryl Tyson W 8 Steve Valdez
Matoko Sasaki KO 9 Tadashi Yuba
Artur Petrosyan KO 8 Francisco Corrales
Kelson Pinto KO 2 Richard Savage

LIGHTWEIGHTS

Juan Lazcano Tech. Win 9 Danny Rios
Diego Corrales KO 1 Roque Cassiani
Matt Zegan KO 5 Mihaly Stan
Juan Gomez Trinidad KO 7
Efren Hinojosa
Jorge Paez Tech. Win 7 Silverio Ortiz
Yuri Romanov KO 4 Sergej Andreychikov
Graham Earl KO 2 Steve Murray
Ryuhei Sugita KO 7 Wooyul Chang
Darling Jimenez W 8 Leonardo Rojas
Prawet Victorygym KO 2
Dedy Suwandana
Isra Girgrah KO 6 Brenda Bell-Drexel

JUNIOR LIGHTWEIGHTS

Orlando Salido KO 4 Armando Cordova
Julio Pablo Chacon KO 8
Claudio Martinet
Zahir Raheem W 10 Isidro Tejedor
Gavin Rees W 6 Andrei Devyataykin
Ruben Galvan KO 5 Nelson Hernandez
Steven Luevano KO 1 Marcos Badillo

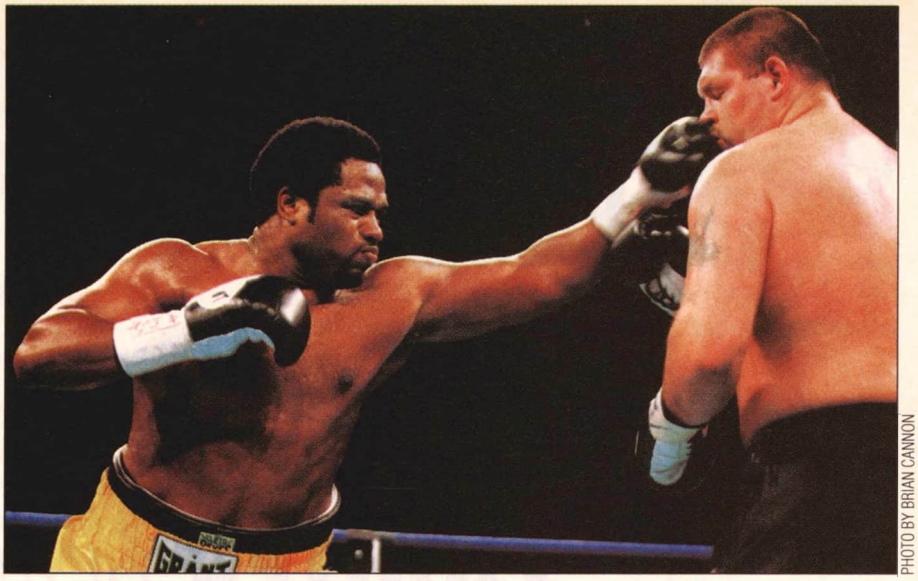

PHOTO BY BRIAN CANNON

Heavyweight Lamon Brewster stuffs a jab in Joe Lenart's face

Jose Reyes W 8 Reggie Sanders
Samuel Kebede KO 2 Ivo Galakov

FEATHERWEIGHTS

Erik Morales KO 3 Eddie Croft
(Retains WBC Title)
Cyril Thomas W 12 Oscar Sanchez
Humberto Soto KO 7 Cesar Figueroa
Bernard Dunne W 4 Oscar Villa
Samantha Browning W 4 Tonya Harding

JUNIOR FEATHERWEIGHTS

David Donis W 12 Edel Ruiz
Junichi Watanabe W 10 Norihisa Tomimoto
Esham Pickering W 12 Duncan Karanja
Fabio Oliva KO 2 Jose Saez
Sod Looknongyangtoy W 12
Thomas Mazaba

BANTAMWEIGHTS

Rafael Marquez KO 8 Tim Austin
(Wins IBF Title)
Genaro Garcia W 12 Mauricio Martinez
Martin Castillo W 8 Valerio Sanchez
Ratanachai Vorapin KO 3 Gun Tinular
Daniel Ponce De Leon KO 2
Trinidad Mendoza
Hideyasu Ishihara KO 4 Jekkree Twinsgym
Poonsawat Kratingdaenggym KO 6
Dozer Toping
Ryuichi Minoriyama KO 9
Noboru Fukuyama
Sasha Baktin KO 7 Yuji Nukaga
Steve Molitor KO 4 Vicente Luis Burgo

JUNIOR BANTAMWEIGHTS

Sornpichai Pisnurachank KO 2
Emil Hussein
Gabula Vabaza W 12 Mbwana Matumla
Neddy Garcia Tech. Win 11
Alberto Ontiveros
Karim Quibir W 12 William De Sousa
Jose Navarro W 10 Keyri Wong
Masaki Kawabata W 10 Randy Mangubat
Pramuansak Phosuwan KO 2
Mlindi Mkhaliphi

FLYWEIGHTS

Hussein Hussein W 10
Wandee Chor Chareon
Giuseppe Lagana W 12 Luis Lazarte
Alberto Rossel W 4 Liborio Romero

JUNIOR FLYWEIGHTS

Jorge Arce KO 1 Ernesto Castro
(Retains WBC Title)
Jose Victor Burgos KO 12 Alex Sanchez
(Wins Vacant IBF Title)
Mhikiza Myekeni W 12 Wendyl Janiola
Fahlan Sakkreerin KO 7 Bong Costelo
Ivan Calderon W 10 Juan Carlos Perez
Ayanda Ramncwana KO 12
Phatu Nemukongwe

STRAWWEIGHTS

Jose Antonio Aguirre KO 7
Juan Alfonso Keb
(Retains WBC Title)
Chana Porpaoin W 6 Denny Ririmese
Noel Tunacao KO 11 Abrin Matta
Muhammad Rachman W 10
Ernesto Rubillar
Julio De La Basez Tech. Win 5
Ernesto Rubillar
Pornsawan Porpramook KO 5
Golden King Atillo

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The RING

FIGHTER of the MONTH

It seemed safe to assume going into Wladimir Klitschko's marking-time bout against Corrie Sanders that it would be a short night. After all, Sanders was 37 and had fought just three rounds in the three years since his loss to Hasim Rahman seemed to eliminate him from contention. Klitschko, meanwhile, was to many the heir apparent to the world heavyweight title. A two-round blowout seemed not just possible, but downright likely.

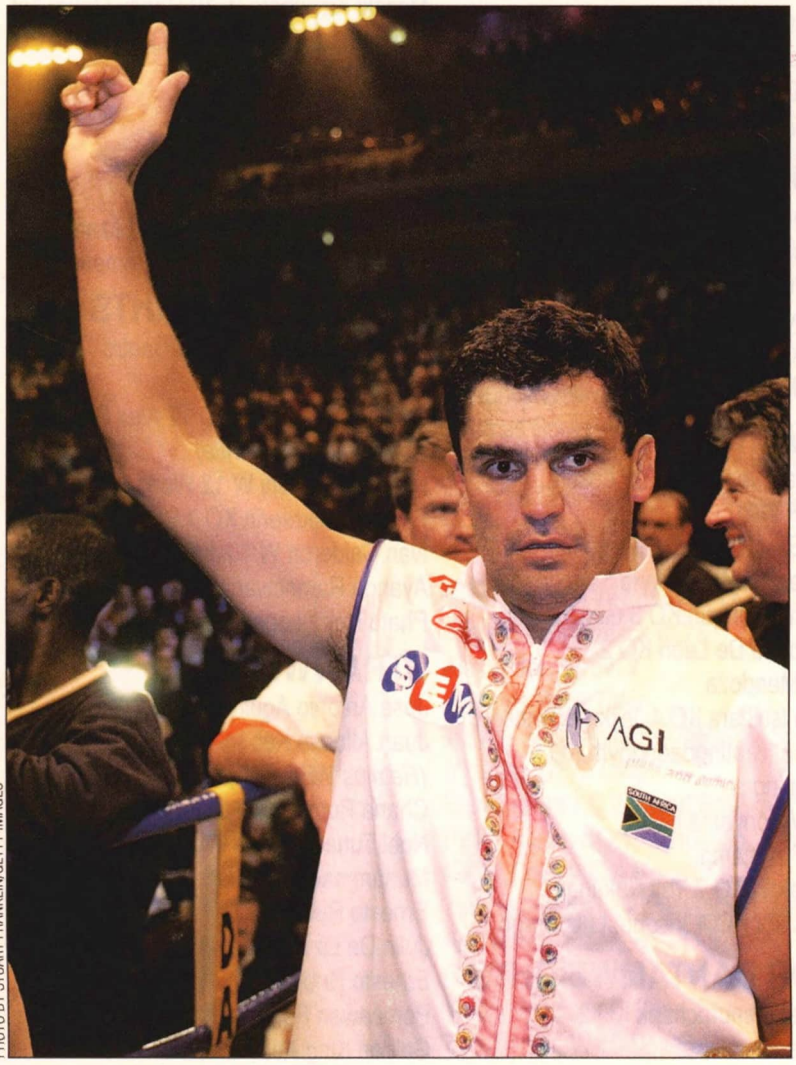

PHOTO BY STUART FRANKLIN/GETTY IMAGES

And a two-round blowout is exactly what we got. But of course, it wasn't supposed to be the chiseled Ukrainian struggling to pick himself up off the canvas four times in those two rounds. And it wasn't supposed to be the almost-retired South African putting him there. But anything can happen after that bell rings, and Sanders, who came into the ring unafraid and determined to give it his best shot, used his superior hand speed, veteran savvy, and vaunted power to batter and bloody the overwhelming favorite. The left hands rained down on Klitschko, sending him down twice in the first and twice in the second, the fourth knockdown prompting the referee's intervention.

The last time we saw an upset this big in the heavyweight division, thousands of South Africans stood witness. This time, it was one of their own sending tremors throughout the boxing world, as Sanders Klitsch-KO'd the heir apparent, turning himself from a virtual nobody to a sudden star.

• • • •

Corrie Sanders

RINGSIDE REPORTS

Shane Mosley No-Contest 3 Raul Marquez

Las Vegas, Nevada: Fighting for the first time since losing back-to-back bouts against Vernon Forrest, Mosley didn't need three full rounds to be done with Marquez. But it was hardly the triumphant return it might sound like, as the fight was stopped with 19 seconds left in the third round because of severe cuts around both of Marquez' eyes. Referee Kenny Bayless (USA) ruled both cuts were caused by inadvertent headbutts. As a result, the bout at Mandalay Bay was declared a no-contest, leaving Mosley—fighting for the first time as a junior middleweight—still winless since he stopped Adrian Stone on July 21, 2001.

In the second round, the pair butted heads and Marquez, 154, Houston, Texas, was cut around his right eye. It appeared to happen as Mosley, 154, Pomona, California, followed through on a missed punch and his momentum slammed the side of his head into Marquez' face.

But the more severe cut occurred late in the third, when another butt opened a gaping wound around Marquez' left eye. The cut was all the way to the bone and there was no way for Marquez to continue.

"I didn't like the way the fight ended," the 31-year-old Mosley said. "I guess our styles were not complimentary. But, in a few more rounds it would have ended by a kayo in my favor."

Mosley's father/trainer, Jack, tried to say the second cut was caused by a Mosley right hand and he accused Marquez, 31, of quitting. Television replays did not uphold Jack Mosley's version of events, but he was insistent. He angered Marquez when he said, "Shane hit him with a right hand and he quit." Marquez, who said he won't retire, shouted back at Jack Mosley. He said he would have won by stoppage if the fight had been allowed to continue.

Marquez, 34-2 (23) with 1 no-contest, said his plan was to allow Mosley, 38-2 (35) with 1 no-contest, to take the early rounds if necessary as long as he wore him down with a body attack. He said he never felt a hard punch from Mosley, but said Sugar Shane was being hurt by his punches. Whether that was true or not, Mosley appeared to win the two completed rounds, but not in any sort of dominant fashion.

"The guy who was supposed to look sensational here was Shane Mosley, not me," Marquez said. "The guy who had to look great was him, and the guy who was supposed to cut real easy from a punch was me, but that's not what happened. You said I was done, that I had nothing left in the tank. Well, did I show something? Did I look done?"

Television: HBO

Promoter: Top Rank

(2-8-03)

Kevin Iole

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

Mosley looks in as Marquez gushes blood

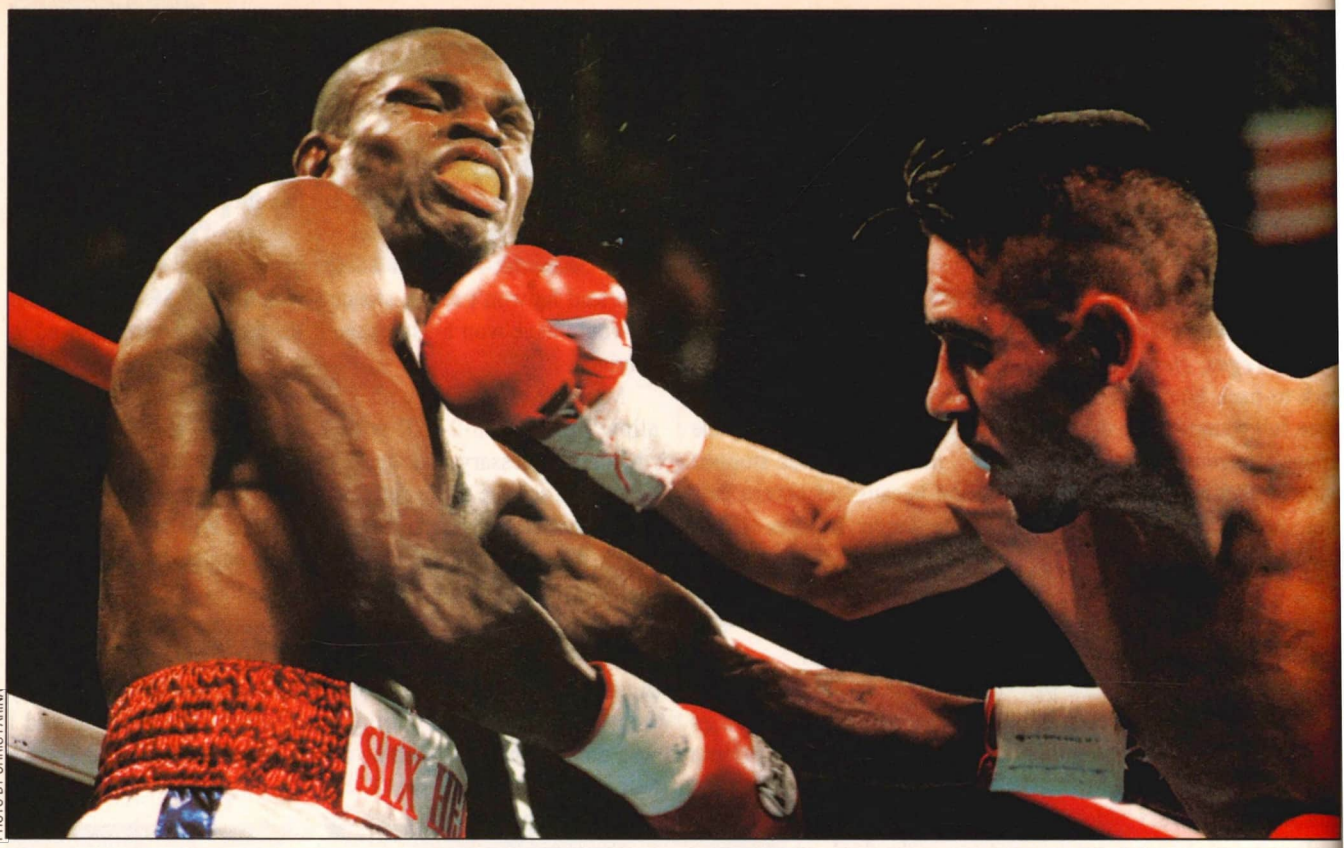

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

Margarito blasts "Six Heads" with a right

Antonio Margarito KO 2 Andrew Lewis

Las Vegas, Nevada: Anyone who saw the first round of Margarito's fight with "Six Heads" Lewis at Mandalay Bay and not the second probably wouldn't believe the result. But Margarito knew during an opening round that he lost by a wide margin that Lewis would not be able to beat him.

Then, Margarito, 146½, Mexico, went out in the second and proved it. He hurt Lewis, 147, Brooklyn, New York, via Guyana, with a crushing right, a left uppercut, and another right, and then caught him on the ropes and was raining punches upon him when referee Joe Cortez (USA) jumped in to stop it at the 2:31 mark.

"I saw the look on his face when he hit me with a left hand and I didn't do anything. I knew then that I had him," Margarito, 28-3 (19), said. "He hit me with his best shots in the first round, and I didn't feel them. I threw my right uppercut, and I saw his body shake, then I went with a big right hand and that's when I knew I hurt him."

The 32-year-old Lewis, who had been knocked out 11 months earlier by Ricardo Mayorga, appeared on top of his game in the first. He controlled the distance and he was busy, landing several clean shots. But he had no answer for the stronger Margarito in the second and welcomed Cortez' assistance.

"He had a right to stop it," Lewis, 22-2-1 (20), said. "I wasn't fighting back."

Margarito, 24, said he's gaining in confidence and believes he is ready for a big-money fight against a name opponent. He called out Mayorga after the bout, but said if Mayorga wouldn't take the fight, he'd move up to 154 in search of Oscar De La Hoya or Fernando Vargas.

De La Hoya said he had no interest in fighting Margarito—a decision perhaps influenced by the WBO welterweight belthold-er's obliteration of Lewis.

"I want to be better every time out, and this was a step on the way," he said.

Television: HBO

Promoter: Top Rank

(2-8-03)

Kevin Iole

Wayne Braithwaite KO 4 Ravea Springs

Miami, Florida: "Big Truck" Braithwaite rolled on in his first defense of the WBC cruiserweight title, overpowering and ultimately overwhelming Springs at Miccosukee Indian Gaming. Though it looked like a decent matchup at first glance, a closer inspection revealed that Springs had fought only five fighters with winning records (losing to two of them), while Braithwaite was 12-0 against fighters on the positive side of .500. It turned out to be every bit the mismatch those numbers suggested.

From the opening bell, the defending titleholder set a fast pace, relentlessly pursuing Springs around the ring and unleashing sweeping punches at the 31-year-old challenger's head, many of which missed their intended target by a wide margin. Braithwaite's corner repeatedly urged him to throw punches at Springs' body, but Braithwaite, 27, ignored the advice and focused almost exclusively on the challenger's head. As a result, Springs, a southpaw from Cincinnati, Ohio, was able to elude many of Braithwaite's punches and counter with jabs and left hands to the head. Nonetheless, Braithwaite was determined to

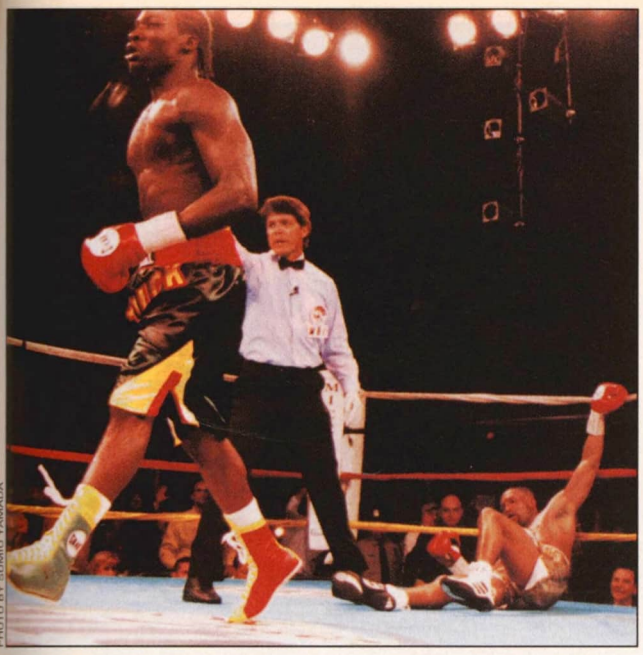

PHOTO BY SUMIO YAMADA

Braithwaite takes Springs out of his step in the fourth

turn the fight into a brawl, and Springs, 25-3 (19), simply lacked the firepower to keep him from boring in on him.

Braithwaite is a natural southpaw, but he frequently switched to an orthodox stance as he looked for any angle from which to land a knockout punch. With about a minute remaining in the fourth round, Braithwaite, 186, Brooklyn, New York, via Guyana, floored Springs, 184, with a pair of right hands to the head. Springs regained his feet, but the Guyanan moved in for the finish.

"He fell, and I said, 'Well, all right, he's hurt, and I'm not going to let him out of this round,'" Braithwaite said. Sure enough, Big Truck dropped Springs again, this time with a pair of left hands to the head. Springs beat the count, but Braithwaite, 19-0 (16), was not concerned. "I knew if he got back up, he would go down again because he was still hurt from the first knockdown," the titlist said. Referee Tom Kimmons (USA) agreed, and correctly decided to stop the fight at 2:40 of the fourth round.

Braithwaite was noncommittal about possible future opponents, except he made it clear that he was not going to be fighting James Toney, who was at ringside, anytime soon.

"Yesterday at the weigh-in, James Toney was talking a bunch of bulls___ to me, talking about he's the best thing," Braithwaite explained. "But James Toney's looking back on past performance. He's old and washed-up. When he was a middleweight, he was a good fighter; super middleweight, he was a good fighter. But now he's not a good fighter."

Television: ESPN2

Promoter: Goossen-Tutor Promotions

(2-21-03)

Ken Knox

Carlos Hernandez Tech. Win 8 David Santos

Las Vegas, Nevada: "Famoso" Hernandez, an American of El Salvadoran ancestry, won the biggest fight of his life while fighting in front of El Salvador's president, Francisco Flores, and two of boxing's greats. Both Roberto Duran and Alexis Arguello were on hand at Mandalay Bay to support Hernandez in his bid for the

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

Hernandez slices through Santos' guard with a jab

vacant IBF junior lightweight belt.

Hernandez, 129½, Bellflower, California, was the bigger and stronger man and he was gradually wearing down Santos, 128½, St. Petersburg, Florida, before the fight was stopped at 2:52 of the eighth round due to an inadvertent clash of heads that led to a deep cut around Santos' right eye. Ringside physician Margaret Goodman ruled Santos could not continue, and Hernandez was ahead on the cards by two scores of 77-74 (Robert Hoyle and Bobby Ferrera) and one tally of 78-73 (Bill Graham).

Santos, 31, came to fight, but Hernandez, 32, was the stronger and busier man. He didn't appear in the class of Duran and Arguello, but he had more than enough to get past Santos.

Cotto flattens Bazan's nose with a left

"I never thought I had good skills, but I know I have a huge heart," a weeping Hernandez said. "I had 6 million people [in El Salvador] inside my heart."

Santos fought valiantly, but just wasn't strong enough. He said he felt he was rallying and was bitterly disappointed by the stoppage. He pleaded with Goodman to let him fight on, but the cut was allowing blood to flow freely into his eye.

"He got me out of my rhythm in the first few rounds," Santos, 42-6 (27), said. "I just couldn't find it. I just hope that the headbutt was not intentional, because he was using his head a lot. I felt I was coming on and that my rhythm was back." In his previous fight, in August '02, Santos lost a close decision to Steve Forbes in a challenge for the same belt. Forbes came in over the weight limit that day, leading to the vacancy that Hernandez and Santos fought to fill.

Hernandez had failed in previous title attempts as well, against Floyd Mayweather and Genaro Hernandez, but this time out, he was relentless with his offense, and that ultimately won him the fight. Much of his work was done downstairs.

"I knew that would eventually take its toll," Hernandez, 38-3-1 (23), said. "If you go to the body enough, it will pay off sooner or later."

Television: Top Rank Pay-Per-View
Promoter: Top Rank
(2-1-03)
Kevin Iole

Miguel Cotto KO 11 Cesar Bazan

Las Vegas, Nevada: Prized junior welterweight prospect Cotto passed his toughest test, thoroughly dominating former lightweight titleholder Bazan and stopping him in the 11th round at Mandalay Bay. The Puerto Rican was superb in pitching a near shutout despite injuring his left hand during the fight. The knuckle on his middle finger was swollen to about twice its normal size, and Cotto didn't let the left hand go as much as he normally does. But he showed that he was not out of place with a world-class fighter, knocking Bazan down in the first and giving him a frightful beating before the bout was stopped.

"He is a very smart, very tough, and very experienced guy," Cotto said. "I had to be patient. I took what was there. I didn't want to try to force anything. I just wanted to see the openings and jump on them."

But he came out blazing and looked as if he might end it early. He caught Bazan, 139, with a picture-perfect short left hook, sending the 28-year-old Mexican down with a thud. When Bazan got up, Cotto was all over him, and only Bazan's guile saved him.

Cotto, 140, blistered him with combinations throughout, regularly snapping Bazan's head. By the sixth round, Bazan's right eye was closing, and by the ninth, it was completely shut. But he refused to quit, and Cotto refused to let up on the punishment.

"He has a big, big heart," Cotto, 14-0 (11), said. "I knew he did. I never thought it would be easy, and it wasn't. He made me work hard for it."

Referee Robert Byrd (USA) nearly stopped it at the end of the 10th round, but opted to give Bazan a final chance. When the 22-year-old Cotto ripped Bazan with a straight right almost immediately after the 11th round began, though, Byrd waved it off just 16 seconds in.

"I was disappointed he stopped it, but I'm all right," Bazan, 39-6-1 (27), said. "There aren't many guys in the world right now who will beat Cotto. He's very good. I'm not unhappy. I fought well, but I fought someone who is really good and was at his best."

Television: Top Rank Pay-Per-View
Promoter: Top Rank
(2-1-03)
Kevin Iole

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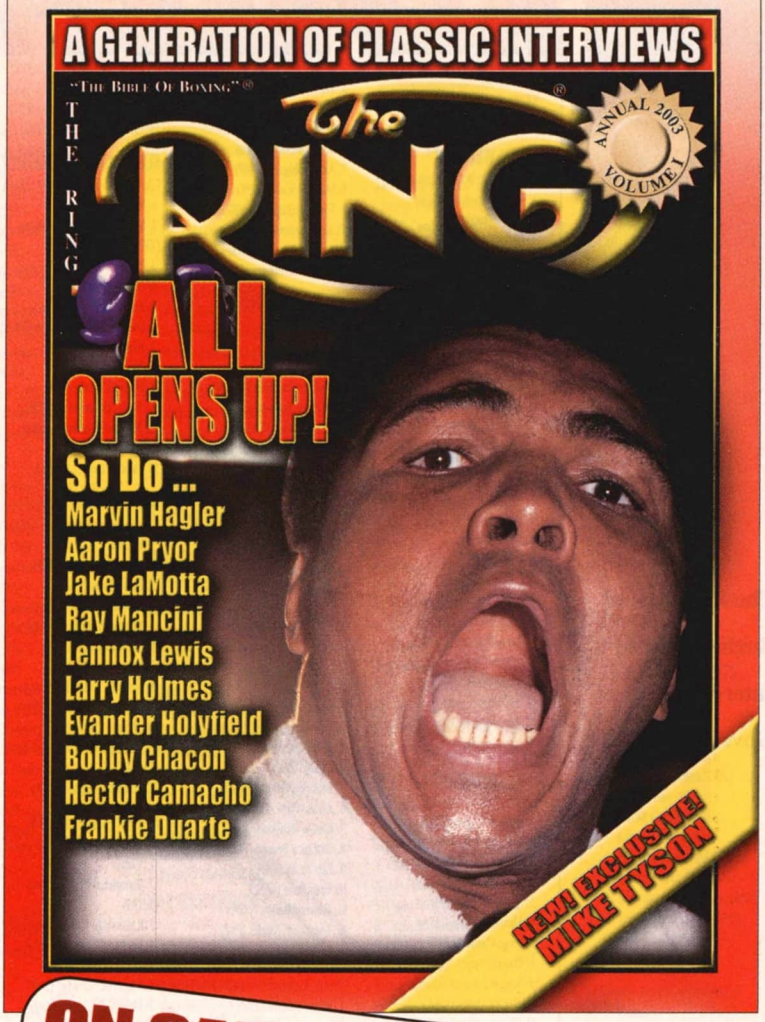

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Alphabet Ratings

The Rankings of Boxing's Three International Governing Bodies

WBA RATINGS
(Ratings as of January 2003)

HEAVYWEIGHTS
Champ: John Ruiz (USA)
1. Vitali Klitschko (UKR)
2. David Tua (NZ)
3. Hasim Rahman (USA)
4. Mike Tyson (USA)
5. Evander Holyfield (USA)
6. Fres Oquendo (PR)
7. Kirk Johnson (CAN)
8. Faruq Saleem (USA)
9. Lamon Brewster (USA)
10. Joe Mesi (USA)
11. Juan Carlos Gomez (CUB)
12. Nicolay Valouev (RUS)

CRUISERWEIGHTS
Champ: Jean Marc Mormeck (FRA)
1. Alexander Gurov (UKR)
2. James Toney (USA)
3. Virgil Hill (USA)
4. O'Neil Bell (USA)
5. Luis Pineda (PAN)
6. Valery Brudov (RUS)
7. Daniel Rowsell (AUSTRL)
8. Ravea Springs (USA)
9. Fabrice Tiozzo (FRA)
10. Louis Azille (GUY)
11. Vincenzo Cantatore (ITA)
12. Alexander Petkovick (GER)

LT. HEAVYWEIGHTS
Unified Champ: Roy Jones (USA)
Champ: Bruno Girard (FRA)
1. Antonio Tarver (USA)
2. Lou Del Valle (USA)
3. Mehdi Sahnoune (FRA)
4. Julio Gonzalez (USA)
5. Manuel Siaca (PR)
6. Montell Griffin (USA)
7. Jorge Castro (ARG)
8. David Telesco (USA)
9. Reggie Johnson (USA)
10. Rocky Torres (USA)
11. Thomas Hansvoll (NOR)
12. Rodney Moore (USA)

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS
Champ: Byron Mitchell (USA)
1. Antwun Echols (USA)
2. Anthony Mundine (AUSTRL)
3. David Starie (GB)
4. Mads Larsen (DEN)
5. Mikkel Kessler (DEN)
6. Danilo Haussler (GER)
7. Thomas Tate (USA)
8. Markus Beyer (GER)
9. Nordin Ben Salah (NETH)
10. Syd Vanderpool (CAN)
11. Charles Brewer (USA)
12. Freeman Barr (USA)

MIDDLEWEIGHTS
Unified Champ: Bernard Hopkins (USA)
Champ: William Joppy (USA)
1. Vacant
2. Bert Schenk (GER)
3. Antonio Perugino (ITA)
4. Robert Allen (USA)
5. Maselino Masoe (AUSTRL)
6. Morrade Hakkar (FRA)
7. Howard Eastman (GB)
8. Erland Betare (FRA)
9. Evans Ashira (DEN)
10. Hassine Cherifi (FRA)
11. Kingsley Ikeke (NIG)
12. Carl Daniels (USA)

SUPER WELTERWEIGHTS
Unified Champ: Oscar De La Hoya (USA)
Champ: Santiago Samaniego (PAN)
1. Vacant
2. Rhoshii Wells (USA)
3. Travis Simms (USA)
4. J.C. Candelo (COL)
5. Mamadou Thiam (FRA)
6. Shane Mosley (USA)
7. Akira Ohigashi (JAP)
8. Michael Rask (DEN)
9. Shannan Taylor (AUSTRL)
10. Kofi Jantuah (GHA)
11. Nader Hamdan (AUSTRL)
12. Angel Hernandez (USA)

WELTERWEIGHTS
Unified Champ: Ricardo Mayorga (CR)
1. Vacant
2. Thomas Damgaard (DEN)
3. Michael Trabant (GER)
4. Jose Rivera (USA)
5. Andrew Lewis (GUY)
6. Carlos Baldomir (ARG)
7. Cory Spinks (USA)
8. Felix Flores (PR)
9. Carlos Quintana (PR)
10. Vince Phillips (USA)
11. Hercules Kyvelos (CAN)
12. Danny Perez (USA)

SUPER LIGHTWEIGHTS
Unified Champ: Kostya Tszyu (AUSTRL)
Champ: Vivian Harris (GUY)
1. Souleyman M'Baye (FRA)
2. Sharmba Mitchell (USA)
3. Ricky Hatton (GB)
4. Oktay Urkal (TUR)
5. Diobelys Hurtado (CUB)
6. Arturo Gatti (USA)
7. Khalid Rahilou (FRA)
8. Gianluca Branco (ITA)
9. Zab Judah (USA)
10. Ener Julio (COL)
11. Randall Bailey (USA)
12. Masakazu Satake (JAP)

LIGHTWEIGHTS
Champ: Leonard Dorin (CAN)
1. Miguel Callist (PAN)
2. Lakva Sim (MON)
3. Juan Lazcano (USA)
4. Raul Balbi (ARG)
5. Steve Johnston (USA)
6. Juan Gomez-Trinidad (PR)
7. Prawet Singwangcha (THAI)
8. Angel Manfredy (USA)
9. Javier Jauregui (MEX)
10. Victoriano Sosa (DR)
11. Orlando Salido (MEX)
12. Steve Quinonez (USA)

SUPER FEATHERWEIGHTS
Unified Champ: Acelino Freitas (BRA)
Champ: Yodsanan Nanthachai (THAI)
1. Joel Casamayor (CUB)
2. Julien Lorcy (FRA)
3. Jorge Barrios (ARG)
4. Phillip Ndou (SA)
5. Daniel Attah (NIG)
6. Jose Miguel Cotto (PR)
7. Silvano Usini (ITA)
8. Carlos Hernandez (SAL)
9. Jesus Chavez (MEX)
10. Randy Suico (PHIL)
11. Nobuhito Honmo (JAP)
12. Nate Campbell (USA)

FEATHERWEIGHTS
Champ: Derrick Gainer (USA)
1. Daniel Seda (PR)
2. Juan Manuel Marquez (MEX)
3. Marco Antonio Barrera (MEX)
4. Naseem Hamed (GB)
5. Injin Chi (KOR)
6. Antonio Cermeno (VEN)
7. Julio Pablo Chacon (ARG)
8. Chris John (IND)
9. Takashi Koshimoto (JAP)
10. Spend Abazi (DEN)
11. Victor Polo (COL)
12. Oscar Leon (COL)

SUPER BANTAMWEIGHTS
Champ: Salim Medjkoune (FRA)
1. Vacant
2. Yoddamrong Sithyodthong (THAI)
3. Yober Ortega (VEN)
4. Osamu Sato (JAP)
5. Kozo Ishii (JAP)
6. Somsak Sithchachawan (THAI)
7. Johnny Armour (GB)
8. Paulie Ayala (USA)
9. Michael Brodie (GB)
10. Nadel Hussein (AUSTRL)
11. Napapol Kiattisachokchai (THAI)
12. Israel Vasquez (MEX)

BANTAMWEIGHTS
Champ: Johnny Bredahl (DEN)
1. Vacant
2. Rafael Marquez (MEX)
3. Eidy Moya (VEN)
4. Hideki Todaka (JAP)
5. Yokthai Sithoar (THAI)
6. Leo Gamez (VEN)
7. Jose Rojas (VEN)
8. Nobuaki Naka (JAP)
9. Toshiaki Nishioka (JAP)
10. Moises Castro (NIC)
11. Poongsawat Krachingdaen (THAI)
12. Ricardo Vargas (MEX)

SUPER FLYWEIGHTS
Champ: Alexander Munoz (VEN)
1. Vacant
2. Sornpichai Pisnurachank (THAI)
3. Katsushige Kawashima (JAP)
4. Joichiro Tatsuyoshi (JAP)
5. Luis Bolanos (COL)
6. Masayuki Arinaga (JAP)
7. Meiji C.P. Gym (THAI)
8. Jesus Rojas (VEN)
9. Saen Sow Ploenchit (THAI)
10. Sot Sor Veerapol (THAI)
11. Hideyasu Ishihara (JAP)
12. Mauricio Pastrana (COL)

FLYWEIGHTS
Champ: Eric Morel (USA)
1. Lorenzo Parra (VEN)
2. Masaki Nakamuna (JAP)
3. Damaen Kelly (GB)
4. Mzukisi Sikali (SA)
5. Alexander Mahmutov (RUS)
6. Denkaosaen Kaowitch (THAI)
7. Isidro Garcia (MEX)
8. Hiroshi Nakano (JAP)
9. Tomas Rojas (MEX)
10. Hussein Hussein (AUSTRL)
11. Brahim Asloum (FRA)
12. Hidenobu Honda (JAP)

LIGHT FLYWEIGHTS
Champ: Rosendo Alvarez (NIC)
1. Bebis Mendoza (COL)
2. Melchor Cob Castro (MEX)
3. Pichit C. Siriwat (THAI)
4. Alex Sanchez (PR)
5. Edgar Velasquez (VEN)
6. Marvin Tampos (PHIL)
7. Eric Ortiz (MEX)
8. Wendyl Janiola (PHIL)
9. Rodel Mayol (PHIL)
10. Tatsuo Kayashida (JAP)
11. Mhikiza Myekeni (SA)
12. Kazuo Okada (JAP)

MINIMUMWEIGHTS
Champ: Noel Arambulet (VEN)
1. Chana Porpaoin (THAI)
2. Joma Gamboa (PHIL)
3. Khulile Makeba (SA)
4. Keitaro Hoshino (JAP)
5. Katzunari Takayama (JAP)
6. Daniel Reyes (COL)
7. Jaewon Kim (KOR)
8. Yutaka Niida (JAP)
9. Genki Ohnaka (JAP)
10. Pornsawan Pramuk (THAI)
11. Wandee Charoen (THAI)
12. Juan Landaeta (VEN)

WBC RATINGS
(Ratings as of February 2003)

HEAVYWEIGHTS
Champ: Lennox Lewis (GB)
1. Vitali Klitschko (UKR)
2. Hasim Rahman (USA)
3. Mike Tyson (USA)
4. Evander Holyfield (USA)
5. David Tua (NZ)
6. Lamon Brewster (USA)
7. John Ruiz (USA)
8. Kirk Johnson (CAN)
9. Fres Oquendo (USA)
10. Sinan Samil San (TUR)
11. Juan Carlos Gomez (CUB)
12. Michael Grant (USA)
13. Joe Mesi (USA)
14. Lou Savarese (USA)
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16. Danny Williams (GB)
17. Jeremy Williams (USA)
18. Lance Whitaker (USA)
19. Frans Botha (SA)
20. Larry Donald (USA)
21. Brian Nielsen (DEN)
22. Andre Purlette (GUY)
23. Clifford Etienne (USA)
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26. Maurice Harris (USA)
27. Timo Hoffman (GB)
28. Cedric Boswell (USA)
29. Dimitry Bakhtov (KAZ)
30. Nikolay Valouev (RUS)

CRUISERWEIGHTS
Champ: Wayne Braithwaite (GUY)
1. O'Neil Bell (USA)
2. Vincenzo Cantatore (ITA)
3. Louis Azille (DR)
4. James Toney (USA)
5. Sebastiaan Rothmann (SA)
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23. Virgil Hill (USA)
24. Frederic Serrat (FRA)
25. Ezra Sellers (USA)
26. Daniel Rowsell (AUSTRL)
27. Jason Robinson (USA)
28. Mohamed Ben Guesmia (ALG)
29. Grigory Drozd (RUS)
30. Vincenzo Rossitto (ITA)

LT. HEAVYWEIGHTS
Champ: Roy Jones (USA)
1. Antonio Tarver (USA)
2. Montell Griffin (USA)
3. Clinton Woods (GB)
4. Thomas Ulrich (GER)
5. Jorge Castro (ARG)
6. Julio Gonzalez (USA)
7. Paul Briggs (AUSTRL)
8. Eric Harding (USA)
9. Derrick Harmon (USA)
10. Stipe Drews (CRO)
11. Kamel Amrane (FRA)
12. Tomasz Adamek (POL)
13. Rodney Moore (USA)
14. Orlando Rivera (PR)
15. Elvir Muriqi (ALB)
16. Robert Stieglitz (GER)
17. Rocky Torres (USA)
18. Tony Oakey (GB)
19. Elvis Michailenko (LAT)
20. Alejandro Lakatus (ROM)
21. Arturo Rivera (MEX)
22. Silvio Branco (ITA)
23. Laudelino Barros (BRA)
24. Zsolt Erdei (HUN)
25. Sasha Mitrevski (MACE)
26. George Jones (USA)
27. Daniel Judah (USA)
28. Rodney Toney (USA)
29. Michael Rush (USA)
30. Ron Simms (USA)

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS
Champ: Eric Lucas (CAN)
1. Markus Beyer (GER)
2. Antwun Echols (USA)
3. Danilo Haussler (GER)
4. Mikkel Kessler (DEN)
5. Mads Larsen (DEN)
6. Syd Vanderpool (CAN)
7. Yoshinori Nishizawa (JAP)
8. Dan Batchelder (USA)
9. Omar Sheika (USA)
10. Andre Thysse (SA)
11. David Starie (GB)
12. Henry Porras (CR)
13. Charles Brewer (USA)
14. Zafarou Ballogou (TOGO)
15. Glenn Catley (GB)
16. Danny Green (AUSTRL)
17. Anthony Mundine (AUSTRL)
18. Mario Veit (GER)
19. Robin Reid (GB)
20. Jeff Lacy (USA)
21. Brian Magee (GB)
22. Kabary Salem (EGY)
23. Nordin Ben Salah (HOL)
24. James Lubwana (UGA)
25. Jean Paul Mendy (FRA)
26. Enrique Ornelas (USA)
27. Victor Oganov (RUS)
28. Charles Adamu (GHA)
29. Craig Cummings (USA)
30. Jerson Ravelo (USA)

MIDDLEWEIGHTS
Champ: Bernard Hopkins (USA)
1. Morrade Hakkar (FRA)
2. Howard Eastman (GB)
3. Cristian Sanavia (ITA)
4. Robert Allen (USA)
5. Erland Betare (FRA)
6. Kuvanych Toygonbayev (UZB)
7. Alejandro Berrio (COL)
8. Aslan Kodzoev (RUS)
9. Oure Evans (KEN)
10. Raymond Joval (HOL)
11. Tito Mendoza (PAN)
12. Sergey Tatevosyan (RUS)
13. Hassine Cherifi (FRA)
14. Quentin Smith (USA)
15. Tokutaro Toyozumi (JAP)
16. Carl Daniels (USA)
17. Andras Galfi (HUN)
18. Jerry Elliott (NIG)
19. Jorge Sendra (SPA)
20. Tony Ayala (USA)
21. Kingsley Ikeke (CAN)
22. Tokunbo Olajide (CAN)
23. Ramon Britez (ARG)
24. Marcos Silvano Diaz (ARG)
25. Jermain Taylor (USA)
26. Satoru Suzuki (JAP)
27. Bert Schenk (GER)
28. Maselino Masoe (NZ)
29. Eric Regan (USA)
30. Rubin Williams (USA)

SUPER WELTERWEIGHTS
Champ: Oscar De La Hoya (US
Interim Champ: Javier Castille
(SPA)
1. Fitz Vanderpool (CAN)
2. Nader Hamdan (AUSTRL)
3. Roman Karmazin (RUS)
4. Wayne Alexander (GB)
5. Akira Ohigashi (JAP)
6. Kassim Ouma (USA)
7. Michael Rask (DEN)
8. Richard Williams (GB)
9. Mihaly Kotai (HUN)
10. Alex Bunema (USA)
11. Christophe Canclaux (FRA
12. Raul Marquez (USA)
13. Rhoshii Wells (USA)
14. Angel Hernandez (MEX)
15. Yory Boy Campas (MEX)
16. Julio Garcia (CUB)
17. Kofi Jantuah (GHA)
18. J.C. Candelo (COL)
19. Andrei Pestriaev (RUS)
20. Steve Roberts (GB)
21. Sergei Dzindziruk (UKR)
22. Travis Simms (USA)
23. Rodney Jones (USA)
24. Carlos Bojorquez (USA)
25. Joachim Alcine (CAN)
26. Marco Antonio Rubio (MEX
27. Anderson Clayton (BRA)
28. Emmett Linton (USA)
29. Michael Jones (GB)
30. Peter Manfredo (USA)

WELTERWEIGHTS
Champ: Ricardo Mayorga (NIC
1. Vernon Forrest (USA)
2. Shane Mosley (USA)
3. Thomas Damgaard (DEN)
4. Carlos Baldomir (ARG)
5. Manuel Gomez (MEX)
6. Alexander Vetoux (UKR)
7. Cory Spinks (USA)
8. Rafael Pineda (COL)
9. Hiroshi Watanabe (JAP)
10. Michel Trabant (GER)
11. Jawaid Khaliq (GB)
12. Jose Luis Cruz (MEX)
13. Miguel Rodriguez (MEX)
14. Michele Orlando (ITA)
15. Rev Santillan (PHIL)
16. Teddy Reid (USA)
17. Paolo Roberto (SWE)
18. Christian Bladt (DEN)
19. James Hare (GB)
20. Felix Flores (PR)
21. Joseph Makaringe (SA)
22. Neil Sinclair (GB)
23. Eduardo Bejarano (ARG)
24. Carlos Quintana (PR)
25. Kermit Cintron (USA)
26. Sergio Martinez (ARG)
27. Riad Menasria (ALG)
28. Chris Smith (USA)
29. Christopher Henry (BAR)
30. Alpaslam Aguzum (TUR)

SUPER LIGHTWEIGHTS
Champ: Kostya Tszyu (AUSTR
1. Gianluca Branco (ITA)
2. Ricky Hatton (GB)
3. Arturo Gatti (CAN)
4. Oktay Urkal (TUR)
5. Zab Judah (USA)
6. Omar Weis (ARG)
7. Sharmba Mitchell (USA)
8. Micky Ward (USA)
9. Miguel Cotto (PR)
10. Masakazu Satake (JAP)
11. James Leija (USA)
12. Hector Camacho Jr. (PR)
13. Eamonn Magee (GB)
14. Muhammad Abdullaev (UZ

15. Francisco Bojado (MEX)
16. Soulemane M'Baye (FRA)
17. Kelson Pinto (BRA)
18. Ricardo Williams (USA)
19. Ener Julio (COL)
20. Diobelys Hurtado (CUB)
21. Junior Witter (GB)
22. Ben Tackie (GHA)
23. Cesar Bazan (MEX)
24. Cosme Rivera (MEX)
25. Ricky Quiles (USA)
26. Mikhail Krivolapov (RUS)
27. Terrance Cauthen (USA)
28. Carlos Mairena (NIC)
29. Allan Vester (DEN)
30. Matoki Sasaki (JAP)

LIGHTWEIGHTS
Champ: Floyd Mayweather (USA)
1. Juan Lazcano (USA)
2. Steve Johnston (USA)
3. Jose Luis Castillo (MEX)
4. Julien Lorcy (FRA)
5. Victoriano Damian Sosa (DR)
6. Kengo Nagashima (JAP)
7. Jason Cook (GB)
8. Dennis Laurente (PHIL)
9. David Burke (GB)
10. Juan Diaz (MEX)
11. Yuri Romanov (UKR)
12. Aldo Rios (ARG)
13. Julio Diaz (USA)
14. Bobby Vanzie (GB)
15. Carlos Gerena (PR)
16. Juan Gomez Trinidad (PR)
17. Colin Dunne (GB)
18. Alex Trujillo (PR)
19. Leavander Johnson (USA)
20. Miguel Callist (PAN)
21. Eleazar Contreras (USA)
22. Cristian Bejarano (MEX)
23. Miguel Callist (PAN)
24. Steve Quinonez (USA)
25. Julian Wheeler (USA)
26. Sayan Sanchat (RUS)
27. Steve Forbes (USA)
28. Michael Clark (USA)
29. Juan Carlos Diaz (SPA)
30. Efren Hinojosa (MEX)
31. Laszlo Herczeg (HUN)

SUPER FEATHERWEIGHTS
Champ: Sirimongkol Singmanassuk (THAI)
1. Jesus Chavez (USA)
2. Philip Ndou (SA)
3. Randy Suico (PHIL)
4. Joel Casamayor (CUB)
5. Mzonke Fana (SA)
6. Daniel Attah (NIG)
7. Affif Djelti (FRA)
8. Nate Campbell (USA)
9. Julio Pablo Chacon (ARG)
10. Nobuto Honmo (JAP)
11. Fernando Trejo (MEX)
12. Jorge Barrios (ARG)
13. Ryuhei Sugita (JAP)
14. Kevin Kelley (USA)
15. Miguel Angel Huerta (MEX)
16. Orlando Salido (MEX)
17. Jorge Paez (MEX)
18. Javier Jauregui (MEX)
19. Yongsoo Choi (KOR)
20. Robbie Peden (AUSTRL)
21. Boris Sinitsin (RUS)
22. Pedro Miranda (SPA)
23. Mike Anchondo (USA)
24. Silverio Ortiz (MEX)
25. Daniel Alicea (PR)
26. Humberto Soto (MEX)
27. Alex Arthur (GB)
28. Wilfredo Vazquez (PR)
29. Lamar Murphy (USA)
30. Bobby Pacquiao(PHIL)

FEATHERWEIGHTS
Champ: Erik Morales (MEX)
1. Injin Chi (KOR)
2. Michael Brodie (GB)
3. Naseem Hamed (GB)
4. Takashi Koshimoto (JAP)
5. Wayne McCullough (IRE)
6. Manuel Calvo (SPA)
7. William Abelyan (USA)
8. Guty Espadas (MEX)
9. Luis Fuentes (MEX)
10. Spend Abazi (DEN)
11. Takalani Noluvo (SA)
12. Zahir Raheem (USA)
13. Rocky Juarez (USA)
14. Cyril Thomas (FRA)
15. Fernando Velardez (MEX)
16. Juan Carlos Ramirez (MEX)
17. Juan Gerardo Cabrera (ARG)
18. Oscar Leon (COL)
19. David Murillo (MEX)
20. Yangsoo Sung (KOR)
21. Angel Chacon (PR)
22. Hector Velazquez (MEX)
23. George Priest Smalls (USA)
24. Frankie Toledo (USA)
25. Dainoshin Kuma (JAP)
26. Choi Tseveenpurev (MON)
27. Valdemir Pereira (BRA)
28. Santiago Rojas (SPA)
29. Gavin Rees (GB)
30. Ruben Estanislao (MEX)

SUPER BANTAMWEIGHTS
Champ: Oscar Larios (MEX)
1. Kiattisak Chocchoi (THAI)
2. Israel Vazquez (MEX)
3. Nadel Hussein (AUSTRL)
4. Paulie Ayala (USA)
5. Shigeru Nakazato (JAP)
6. Willie Jorrin (USA)
7. Osamu Sato (JAP)
8. Kozo Ishii (JAP)
9. Junichi Watanabe (JAP)
10. Emmanuel Lucero (USA)
11. Lehlo Ledwaba (SA)
12. Akihiro Kanai (JAP)
13. Celestino Caballero (PAN)
14. David Donis (USA)
15. Mahyar Monshipour (FRA)
16. Marcos Licona (MEX)
17. Jose Rojas (VEN)
18. Manabu Fukushima (JAP)
19. Jilrex Laca (PHIL)
20. Masakazu Sugawara (JAP)
21. Youngjin Cho (KOR)
22. Bones Adams (USA)
23. Vincenzo Gigliotti (ITA)
24. Jaekwang Chung (KOR)
25. Alejandro Barrera (MEX)
26. Michael Alldis (GB)
27. Wethya Singwangcha (THAI)
28. Yober Ortega (VEN)
29. Hector Julio Avila (DR)
30. Martin Honorio (MEX)

BANTAMWEIGHTS
Champ: Veerapol Sahaprom (THAI)
1. Toshiaki Nishioka (JAP)
2. Diego Morales (MEX)
3. Genaro Garcia (USA)
4. Noel Wilders (GB)
5. Jess Maca (PHIL)
6. David Guerault (FRA)
7. Ricardo Vargas (MEX)
8. Julio Zarate (MEX)
9. Joichiro Tatsuyoshi (JAP)
10. Jhonny Gonzalez (MEX)
11. Tim Austin (USA)
12. Julio Gamboa (NIC)
13. Gerardo Martinez (MEX)
14. Jesus Perez (COL)
15. Hugo Dianzo (MEX)
16. Daniel Ponce (MEX)
17. Hideki Todaka (JAP)
18. Heriberto Ruiz (MEX)
19. Moises Castro (NIC)
20. Sasha Baktin (RUS)
21. Steve Molitor (CAN)
22. Jorge Lacierva (MEX)
23. Nobuaki Naka (JAP)
24. Eidy Moya (VEN)
25. Johnny Armour (GB)
26. Hozumi Hasegawa (JAP)
27. Silence Mabuza (SA)
28. Nicky Booth (GB)
29. Johnny Bear (PHIL)
30. Miguel Angel Munguia (MEX)

SUPER FLYWEIGHTS
Champ: Masamori Tokuyama (JAP)
1. Dimitri Kirilov (RUS)
2. Reynaldo Hurtado (COL)
3. Luis Bolano (COL)
4. Malcolm Tunacao (PHIL)
5. Katsushige Kawashima (JAP)
6. Mauricio Pastrana (COL)
7. Medgoen Singsurat (THAI)
8. Jose Beranza (MEX)
9. Hideyasu Ishihara (JAP)
10. Saen Sow Ploenchit (THAI)
11. Felix Machado (VEN)
12. Martin Castillo (MEX)
13. Jose Navarro (USA)
14. Oscar Andrade (MEX)
15. Masayuki Arinaga (JAP)
16. Ricardo Cordoba (PAN)
17. Shin Ogata (JAP)
18. Peter Culshaw (GB)
19. Karim Quibir (SPA)
20. Masaki Kawabata (JAP)
21. Erick Lopez (MEX)
22. Valerio Sanchez (MEX)
23. Lunga Ntontela (SA)
24. Simphewe Khandisa (SA)
25. Rogelio Galicia (PHIL)
26. Waenpetch Chuwatana (THAI)
27. Neddy Garcia (USA)
28. Eduardo Pacheco (COL)
29. Cuauhtemoc Vargas (MEX)
30. Rolando Gerongco (PHIL)

FLYWEIGHTS
Champ: Pongsaklek Wonjongkam (THAI)
1. Hussein Hussein (AUSTRL)
2. Hiroshi Nakano (JAP)
3. Hidenobu Honda (JAP)
4. Masaki Nakamuna (JAP)
5. Brian Viloria (USA)
6. Alexander Mahmutov (RUS)
7. Luis Maldonado (MEX)
8. Tomas Rojas (MEX)
9. Damaen Kelly (GB)
10. Noriyuki Komatsu (JAP)
11. Randy Mangubat (PHIL)
12. Wandee Chor Chareon (THAI)
13. Lorenzo Parra (VEN)
14. Takefumi Sakata (JAP)
15. Mzukisi Sikali (SA)
16. Koji Koyama (JAP)
17. Mimoun Chent (FRA)
18. Brahim Asloum (FRA)
19. Daisuke Naito (JAP)
20. Hayato Asai (JAP)
21. Yusuke Morishima (JAP)
22. Ramses Patterson (USA)
23. Ivan Hernandez (MEX)
24. Jose Araiza (MEX)
25. Angel Priolo (COL)
26. Jose Lopez Bueno (SPA)
27. Jason Booth (GB)
28. Steffen Norskov (DEN)
29. Ever Briseno (NIC)
30. Glenn Donaire (PHIL)

LIGHT FLYWEIGHTS
Champ: Jorge Arce (MEX)
1. Melchor Cob Castro (MEX)
2. Juanito Rubillar (PHIL)
3. Yosam Choi (KOR)
4. Eric Ortiz (MEX)
5. Bebis Mendoza (COL)
6. Tatsuo Hayashida (JAP)
7. Rafael Lozano (SPA)
8. Manuel Vargas (MEX)
9. Roberto Vazquez (PAN)
10. Edgar Cardenas (MEX)
11. Jesus Martinez (MEX)
12. Marvin Tampos (PHIL)
13. Monelisi Myekeni (SA)
14. Wendyl Janiola (PHIL)
15. Agustin Luna (MEX)
16. Masato Hatakeyama (JAP)
17. Joma Gamboa (PHIL)
18. Saman Sorjaturong (THAI)
19. Shingo Yamaguchi (JAP)
20. Hugo Cazares (MEX)
21. Andrea Sarritzu (ITA)
22. Nerys Espinoza (NIC)
23. Ernesto Castro (NIC)
24. Juan Centeno (NIC)
25. Katsunari Takayama (JAP)
26. Rodrigo Garcia (MEX)
27. Steve Msimango (SA)
28. Jun Kitano (JAP)
29. Liborio Romero (MEX)
30. Samransak Singmanassuk (THAI)

STRAWWEIGHTS
Champ: Jose Antonio Aguirre (MEX)
1. Khulile Makeba (SA)
2. Isaac Bustos (MEX)
3. Sarikalek O. Eakarin (THAI)
4. Eagle Okuda (JAP)
5. Heriberto Gijon (PHIL)
6. Jaewon Kim (KOR)
7. Rodel Mayol (PHIL)
8. Satoshi Kogumasaka (JAP)
9. Genki Ohnaka (JAP)
10. Juan Palacios (NIC)
11. Ernesto Rubillar (PHIL)
12. Hiroyuki Abe (JAP)
13. Noel Tunacao (PHIL)
14. Keitaro Hoshino (JAP)
15. Juan Alfonso Keb Baas (MEX)
16. Hiroshi Nakajima (JAP)
17. Chana Porpaoin (THAI)
18. Ki-Moon Na (KOR)
19. Roberto Leyva (MEX)
20. Yutaka Niida (JAP)
21. Hiroshi Matsumoto (JAP)
22. Makoto Suzuki (JAP)
23. Sizwe Sinyabi (SA)
24. Ulises Solis (MEX)
25. Manasak Yoothakit (THAI)
26. Omar Soto (MEX)
27. Namchai Ratanachaigym (THAI)
28. Pornsawan Porpramook (THAI)
29. Ivan Calderon (PR)
30. Oledong Sithsanerchai (THAI)

IBF RATINGS
(Ratings as of February 2003)

HEAVYWEIGHTS
Champ: Chris Byrd (USA)
1. Vacant
2. Vacant
3. David Tua (NZ)
4. Hasim Rahman (USA)
5. Vitali Klitschko (UKR)
6. Fres Oquendo (USA)
7. Clifford Etienne (USA)
8. Kirk Johnson (CAN)
9. Lou Savarese (USA)
10. Maurice Harris (USA)
11. Lamon Brewster (USA)
12. Evander Holyfield (USA)

CRUISERWEIGHTS
Champ: Vassiliy Jirov (KAZ)
1. James Toney (USA)
2. Vacant
3. O'Neil Bell (USA)
4. Virgil Hill (USA)
5. Alexander Gurov (UKR)
6. Ravea Springs (USA)
7. Jason Robinson (USA)
8. Vincenzo Cantatore (ITA)
9. Kelvin Davis (USA)
10. Dale Brown (CAN)
11. Krysztof Wlodarczyk (POL)
12. Louis Azille (USA)

LT. HEAVYWEIGHTS
Champ: Vacant
1. Antonio Tarver (USA)
2. Vacant
3. Montell Griffin (USA)
4. Julio Gonzalez (USA)
5. Derrick Harmon (USA)
6. Eric Harding (USA)
7. Jorge Castro (ARG)
8. Thomas Ulrich (GER)
9. Paul Briggs (AUSTRL)
10. Clinton Woods (GB)
11. Silvio Branco (ITA)
12. Stipe Drews (CRO)

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS
Champ: Sven Ottke (GER)
1. Antwun Echols (USA)
2. Danilo Haussler (GER)
3. Mads Larsen (DEN)
4. David Starie (GB)
5. Charles Brewer (USA)
6. Markus Beyer (GER)
7. Syd Vanderpool (CAN)
8. Mikkel Kessler (DEN)
9. Glenn Catley (GB)
10. Danny Green (AUSTRL)
11. Mario Veit (GER)
12. Jermain Taylor (USA)

MIDDLEWEIGHTS
Champ: Bernard Hopkins (USA)
1. Robert Allen (USA)
2. Vacant
3. Carl Daniels (USA)
4. Raymond Joval (HOL)
5. Howard Eastman (GB)
6. Erland Betare (FRA)
7. Bert Schenk (GER)
8. Morrade Hakkar (FRA)
9. Tito Mendoza (PAN)
10. Antonio Perugino (ITA)
11. Bea Diallo (LIB)
12. Evans Ashira (GUY)

JR. MIDDLEWEIGHTS
Champ: Winky Wright (USA)
1. J.C. Candelo (USA)
2. Vacant
3. Andrei Pestriaev (RUS)
4. Alex Bunema (USA)
5. Bronco McKart (USA)
6. Shane Mosley (USA)
7. Emmett Linton (USA)
8. Angel Hernandez (USA)
9. Nader Hamdan (AUSTRL)
10. Travis Simms (USA)
11. Mikael Rask (DEN)
12. Carlos Bojorquez (MEX)

WELTERWEIGHTS
Champ: Michele Piccirillo (ITA)
1. Cory Spinks (USA)
2. Vacant
3. Thomas Damgaard (DEN)
4. Hercules Kyvelos (CAN)
5. Vernon Forrest (USA)
6. James Hare (ENG)
7. Rafael Pineda (COL)
8. Jose Rivera (USA)
9. Jose Celaya (USA)
10. Antonio Diaz (MEX)
11. Christian Bladt (DEN)
12. Kermit Cintron (USA)

JR. WELTERWEIGHTS
Champ: Kostya Tszyu (AUSTRL)
1. Arturo Gatti (USA)
2. Sharmba Mitchell (USA)
3. Oktay Urkal (TUR)
4. Zab Judah (USA)
5. Omar Weis (ARG)
6. Diobelys Hurtado (CUB)
7. Micky Ward (USA)
8. Emanuel Augustus (USA)
9. Ben Tackie (GHA)
10. James Leija (USA)
11. Miguel Cotto (USA)
12. Carlos Vilches (ARG)

LIGHTWEIGHTS
Champ: Paul Spadafora (USA)
1. Vacant
2. Leavander Johnson (USA)
3. Angel Manfredy (USA)
4. Javier Jauregui (MEX)
5. Victoriano Sosa (DR)
6. Juan Gomez Trinidad (PR)
7. Jose Luis Castillo (MEX)
8. Juan Lazcano (USA)
9. Steve Johnston (USA)
10. Julien Lorcy (FRA)
11. Julio Diaz (USA)
12. Lamar Murphy (USA)

JR. LIGHTWEIGHTS
Champ: Carlos Hernandez (USA)
1. Steve Forbes
2. Vacant
3. Joel Casamayor (USA)
4. Jorge Barrios (ARG)
5. Jesus Chavez (USA)
6. David Santos (USA)
7. Nate Campbell (USA)
8. Phillip Ndou (SA)
9. Daniel Attah (USA)
10. Orlando Salido (MEX)
11. Daniel Alicea (USA)
12. Kevin Kelley (USA)

FEATHERWEIGHTS
Champ: Juan Manuel Marquez (MEX)
1. Vacant
2. Vacant
3. Oscar Leon (PR)
4. Marco Antonio Barrera (MEX)
5. Michael Brodie (ENG)
6. William Abelyan (USA)
7. Manuel Medina (MEX)
8. Johnny Tapia (USA)
9. Frankie Toledo (USA)
10. Victor Polo (COL)
11. Guty Espadas (USA)
12. Paulie Ayala (USA)

JR. FEATHERWEIGHTS
Champ: Manny Pacquaio (PHIL)
1. Vacant
2. Vacant
3. Jose Luis Valbuena (ARG)
4. Lehlo Ledwaba (SA)
5. Fernando Velardez (USA)
6. Diego Morales (MEX)
7. Jorge Eliecer Julio (COL)
8. Enrique Sanchez (MEX)
9. F. Rakkiatgym (THAI)
10. David Donis (USA)
11. Nadel Hussein (AUSTRL)
12. Walter Estrada (COL)

BANTAMWEIGHTS
Champ: Rafael Marquez (MEX)
1. Vacant
2. Vacant
3. Pete Frissina (USA)
4. Jesus Perez (COL)
5. Ricardo Vargas (MEX)
6. Roger Gonzalez (USA)
7. Tim Austin (USA)
8. David Guerault (FRA)
9. Adan Vargas (MEX)
10. Ratanachai Vorapin (THAI)
11. Jose Aguiniga (USA)
12. Fahsung 3K Battery (THAI)

JR. BANTAMWEIGHTS
Champ: Luis Perez (NIC)
1. Vacant
2. Vacant
3. Felix Machado (VEN)
4. Mauricio Pastrana (COL)
5. Luis Bolano (COL)
6. Martin Castillo (MEX)
7. Adonis Rivas (NIC)
8. Peter Culshaw (ENG)
9. Vernie Torres (USA)
10. Katsushige Kawashima (JAP)
11. Joichiro Tatsuyoshi (JAP)
12. Julio Coronell (MEX)

FLYWEIGHTS
Champ: Irene Pacheco (COL)
1. Vacant
2. Vacant
3. Alexander Mahmutov (RUS)
4. Damaen Kelly (GB)
5. Hussein Hussein (LEB)
6. Wandee Chareon (THAI)
7. Masaki Nakanuma (JAP)
8. Alejandro Montiel (MEX)
9. Randy Mangubat (PHIL)
10. Isidro Garcia (MEX)
11. Vic Darchinian (AUSTRL)
12. Angel Priolo (COL)

JR. FLYWEIGHTS
Champ: Jose Burgos (MEX)
1. Vacant
2. Vacant
3. Wendyl Janiola (PHIL)
4. Fahlan Sakreerin (THAI)
5. Melchor Cob Castro (MEX)
6. Juan Keb Baas (MEX)
7. Alexander Sanchez (PR)
8. Eric Ortiz (MEX)
9. Bebis Mendoza (COL)
10. Noel Tunacao (PHIL)
11. Hidenobu Honda (JAP)
12. Zolani Petelo (SA)

MINI FLYWEIGHTS
Champ: Miguel Barrera (MEX)
1. Vacant
2. Vacant
3. Daniel Reyes (COL)
4. Ernesto Rubillar (PHIL)
5. Chana Porpaoin (THAI)
6. Hiroshi Matsumoto (JAP)
7. Ivan Calderon (PR)
8. Roberto Leyva (MEX)
9. Muhammad Rachman (INDO)
10. Jaewon Kim (KOR)
11. Sarikalrk Ekarin (THAI)
12. Joma Gamboa (PHIL)

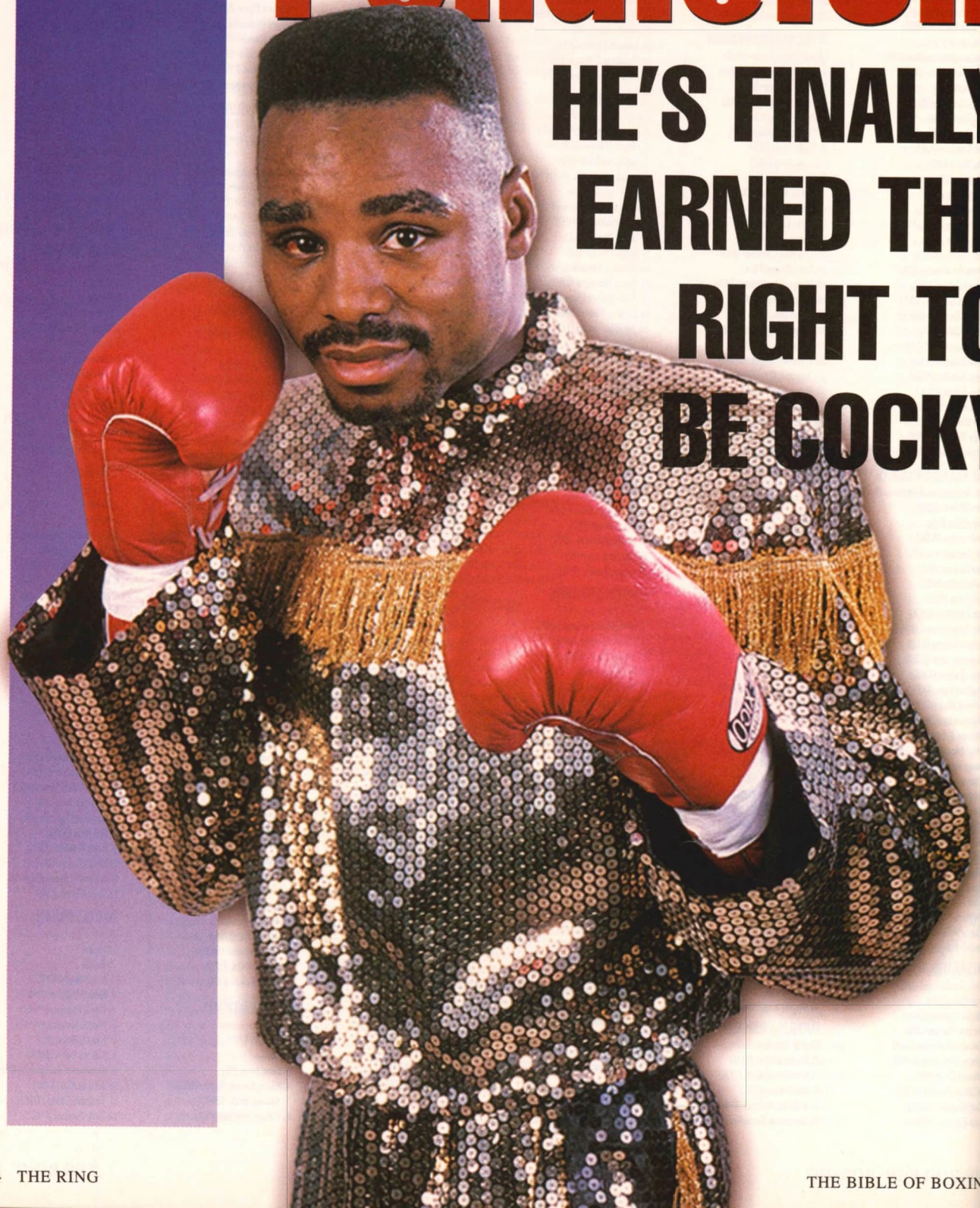
CLASSIC

From THE RING, May 1993

IBF Lightweight Champ

Freddie Pendleton

HE'S FINALLY EARNED THE RIGHT TO BE COCKY



By Jeff Ryan

When a boxer has 17 losses on his record, he's supposed to tiptoe, not strut. He's supposed to hail taxis, not his own arrival. If a guy with a 33-17-4 record beats his chest, everyone thinks he must have indigestion. If he pops his buttons, we assume that he just buys cheap shirts. A .667 winning percentage is great, all right—if you're a hockey team. If you're a fighter with those numbers, you better limit your trash talk to debating the garbageman on the merits of a Glad bag vs. a Hefty Cinch Sak.

Had "Fearless" Freddie Pendleton believed any of this, of course, he wouldn't have been where he was on the night of January 10, which was on a throne, inside the history books, and IN YOUR FACE like ESPNdelton. After capturing the vacant IBF lightweight title by defeating Tracy Spann at Harrah's hotel-casino in Atlantic City, Pendleton donned shades, strutted into the postfight press conference like he was auditioning for a *Saturday Night Fever* sequel, and declared, "I'm pretty, I move good, I dance good, and I knew I'd be a world champion." Then he scrapped the humility and spoke his mind.

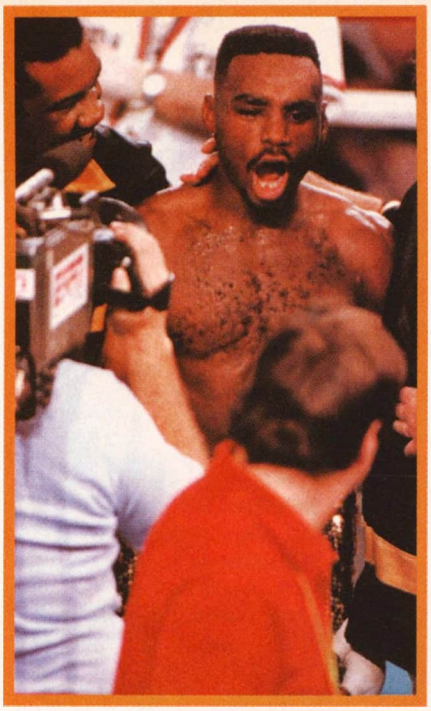
"You *know* I'm a cute fighter," he said, leaving the befuddled press corps to wonder if he was still on the topic of his face or his moves. "If it ain't done the Freddie Pendleton way, it ain't done right. No one could have beaten Spann except me. I mean, look at me, I'm *that* good."

Say what you want about Pendleton, but don't accuse him of being full of himself. He could *never* get his fill.

There is a certain symmetry to Pendleton ruling a third of the lightweight kingdom. The weight class is already the cockiest in boxing, a place where arrogance is a prerequisite for admittance, and there is an overabundance of egos, alter egos, and altars built to egos. (Pendleton, Tony Lopez, Joey Gamache, and Jorge Paez could stage a great round-robin, even if the four of them were just standing around and insulting each other's mothers.) It is a light brigade whose charge cries out for a Fearless leader.

But then again …

What the hell is Freddie Pendleton doing *anywhere near* a world championship? After four pro fights, he was 1-3. *(Okay, the pro game is a big adjustment, he's only 19, give him time.)* After 25 fights, he was 12-12-1, and had lost to unforgettables Bobby Johnson and Ricky Young. *(Yeah, but he kayoed Tyrone Trice in one round.)* After 42 fights, he was 23-16-3, but still losing to pugs like John Montes. *(But he beat Bramble and Mayweather, and "Sweet Pea" Whitaker may give him a title shot.)* After the Whitaker fight, he was applauded for his impressive showing, he was *still* uncrowned, and he was 24-17-3. *(Freddie, you've had a good career, and we don't want you to get hurt. Maybe you should think about …)*



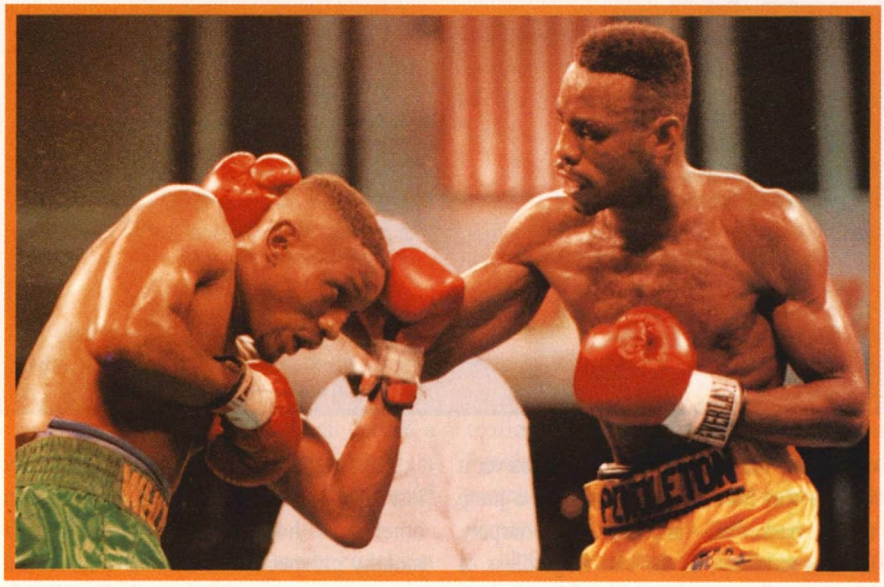
"Fearless" Freddie Pendleton had a reason to open his mouth and let the world know he arrived after beating Tracy Spann for the vacant IBF lightweight title. Despite his mediocre 33-17-4 record, Pendleton had finally made it to the top.

"There's only one time I ever really thought about giving it up," the 30-year-old Pendleton says. "That was when I fought Joey Olivera in the Stroh's tournament in 1986."

Pendleton dropped a split decision at the Fabulous Forum, but what exactly happened in the bout's final seconds is open to debate. Pendleton says he had Olivera hurt and ready to quit, that referee Dr. James Jen-Kin was waving his arms to stop the bout, and that when the ref heard the pro-Olivera crowd react angrily, he changed his mind and let the action continue. The British *Boxing News* account of the bout, however, says that Olivera turned away to complain about being thumbed, and that after the ringside doctor was called in, Olivera himself insisted that he be allowed to continue.

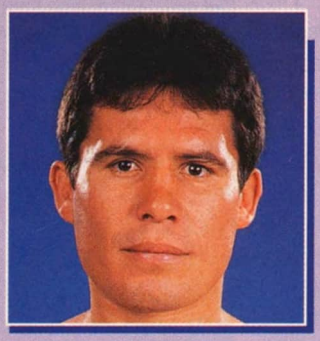
"I fought as hard as I could, and after that fight, my trainer, Larry Kent, came down on me," Pendleton says. "He was yelling that I should have knocked the guy out early. I didn't need to hear that. I was so disappointed with everything that I just wanted to quit. But then I went home, took a rest, and remembered how much my family needed the money."

Of course, the money. His master and his redeemer. His problem and his solution. There was never very much of it, but the little bit that was offered was often the only wind current that directed a career forever adrift in choppy seas. Phone calls would



After losing a 12-round decision to lightweight world champion Pernell Whitaker in 1990, Pendleton's record fell to 24-17-3. But Fearless Freddie gained respect in defeat by giving "Sweet Pea" a tussle.

THE RING RATINGS, May 1993



Julio Cesar Chavez

HEAVYWEIGHTS
1. **Riddick Bowe,** Fort Washington, MD
2. **Lennox Lewis,** England
3. **Evander Holyfield,** Atlanta, GA
4. **Michael Moorer,** Detroit, MI
5. **Tony Tucker,** Beverly Hills, CA
6. **George Foreman,** Marshall, TX
7. **Razor Ruddock,** Canada
8. **Ray Mercer,** Fayetteville, NC
9. **Tommy Morrison,** Merriam, KS
10. **Alex Garcia,** San Fernando, CA

CRUISERWEIGHTS
1. **Bobby Czyz,** Montgomery, NJ
2. **Anaclet Wamba,** France
3. **Al Cole,** Newark, NJ
4. **Orlin Norris,** Campo, CA
5. **James Warring,** Miami, FL
6. **Nate Miller,** Philadelphia, PA
7. **Arthur Williams,** Las Vegas, NV
8. **Akim Tafer,** France
9. **Marcelo Figueroa,** Argentina
10. **Robert Daniels,** Miami, FL

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS
1. **Prince Charles Williams,** Mansfield, OH
2. **Virgil Hill,** Bismarck, ND
3. **Jeff Harding,** Australia
4. **Thomas Hearns,** Detroit, MI
5. **Leeonzer Barber,** Detroit, MI
6. **Frank Tate,** Houston, TX
7. **Henry Maske,** Germany
8. **Tim Hillie,** Washington, D.C.
9. **Egerton Marcus,** Canada
10. **Randall Yonker,** Mobile, AL

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS
1. **Michael Nunn,** Davenport, IA
2. **Iran Barkley,** Bronx, NY
3. **Chris Eubank,** England
4. **Victor Cordoba,** N. Ireland
5. **Nigel Benn,** England
6. **Tim Littles,** Flint, MI
7. **Darrin Van Horn,** Lexington, KY
8. **Tony Thornton,** Glassboro, NJ
9. **Frank Liles,** N. Hollywood, CA
10. **Frank Nicotra,** France

MIDDLEWEIGHTS
1. **Julian Jackson,** Virgin Islands
2. **James Toney,** Ann Arbor, MI
3. **Reggie Johnson,** Houston, TX
4. **Roy Jones,** Pensacola, FL
5. **Mike McCallum,** Brooklyn, NY
6. **Sumbu Kalambay,** Italy
7. **Gerald McClellan,** Detroit, MI
8. **Lamar Parks,** Greeneville, SC
9. **Bernard Hopkins,** Philadelphia, PA
10. **Thomas Tate,** Houston, TX

JUNIOR MIDDLEWEIGHTS
1. **Terry Norris,** Mission Valley, CA
2. **Julio Cesar Vasquez,** Argentina
3. **Gianfranco Rosi,** Italy
4. **Vinny Pazienza,** Cranston, RI
5. **John David Jackson,** Seattle, WA
6. **Verno Phillips,** New York, NY
7. **Gilbert Dele,** France
8. **Carl Daniels,** St. Louis, MO
9. **Aaron Davis,** Bronx, NY
10. **Laurent Boudouani,** France

WELTERWEIGHTS
1. **Buddy McGirt,** Hauppauge, NY
2. **Crisanto Espana,** N. Ireland
3. **Maurice Blocker,** Germantown, MD
4. **Yory Boy Campas,** Mexico
5. **Manning Galloway,** Columbus, OH
6. **Ludovic Proto,** France
7. **Genaro Leon,** Mexico
8. **Stephan Johnson,** Brooklyn, NY
9. **David Gonzalez,** Houston, TX
10. **Larry Barnes,** Mount Vernon, NY

JUNIOR WELTERWEIGHTS
1. **Julio Cesar Chavez,** Mexico
2. **Pernell Whitaker,** Norfolk, VA
3. **Juan Coggi,** Argentina
4. **Terrence Alli,** Linden, NJ
5. **Charles Murray,** Newark, NJ
6. **Rafael Pineda,** Colombia
7. **Carlos Gonzalez,** Mexico
8. **Hector Lopez,** Tarzana, CA
9. **Greg Haugen,** Henderson, NV
10. **Kostya Tszyu,** Australia

LIGHTWEIGHTS
1. **Miguel Angel Gonzalez,** Mexico
2. **Freddie Pendleton,** Miami, FL
3. **Tony Lopez,** Sacramento, CA
4. **Rafael Ruelas,** Arleta, CA
5. **Tracy Spann,** Plainfield, NJ
6. **Joey Gamache,** Lewiston, ME
7. **Sharmba Mitchell,** Takoma Park, MD
8. **Jean-Baptiste Mendy,** France
9. **Leavander Johnson,** Atlantic City, NJ
10. **Sergei Artemiev,** Brooklyn, NY

JUNIOR LIGHTWEIGHTS
1. **Azumah Nelson,** Ghana
2. **Genaro Hernandez,** Los Angeles, CA
3. **John-John Molina,** Puerto Rico
4. **Jeff Fenech,** Australia
5. **Bernard Taylor,** Knoxville, TN
6. **Gabe Ruelas,** Arleta, CA
7. **Calvin Grove,** Philadelphia, PA
8. **Regilio Tuur,** Whitestone, NY
9. **Renato Cornett,** Australia
10. **Victor Hugo Paz,** Argentina

FEATHERWEIGHTS
1. **Paul Hodkinson,** England
2. **Manuel Medina,** Mexico
3. **Yung Kyun Park,** South Korea
4. **Kevin Kelley,** Flushing, NY
5. **Jesse James Leija,** San Antonio, TX
6. **Tom Johnson,** Detroit, MI
7. **Ruben D. Palacio,** Colombia
8. **Luisito Espinosa,** Philippines
9. **Colin McMillan,** England
10. **Goyo Vargas,** Mexico

JUNIOR FEATHERWEIGHTS
1. **Kennedy McKinney,** Las Vegas, NV
2. **Tracy Patterson,** Highland, NY
3. **Welcome Ncita,** South Africa
4. **Wilfredo Vasquez,** Puerto Rico
5. **Duke McKenzie,** England
6. **Jesse Benavides,** Corpus Christi, TX
7. **Jesus Salud,** San Diego, CA
8. **Rudy Zavala,** Rosemead, CA
9. **Luis Mendoza,** Colombia
10. **Julio Gervacio,** Puerto Rico

BANTAMWEIGHTS
1. **Orlando Canizales,** Laredo, TX
2. **Eliecer Julio,** Colombia
3. **Victor Rabanales,** Mexico
4. **Junior Jones,** Brooklyn, NY
5. **Joichiro Tatsuyoshi,** Japan

come, and Pendleton would drop whatever it was he was holding—a newspaper, a jump rope, a basketball—and head to the airport, the bus terminal, or the car. Regardless of who held the contract, fate and luck—both bad and good—were his real managers.

He fought terribly and brilliantly, clearly lost fights he should have won, got jobbed in other guys' hometowns, and knocked off mouthy prospects who assumed his record guaranteed an easy night's work. He toiled in Scranton, Pennsylvania, and Lafayette, Louisiana, and spoiled in Green Bay, Wisconsin, and Santo Domingo. Managers who didn't care threw him into fights he shouldn't have taken, and promoters who considered him dangerous wouldn't give him the fights he wanted the most.

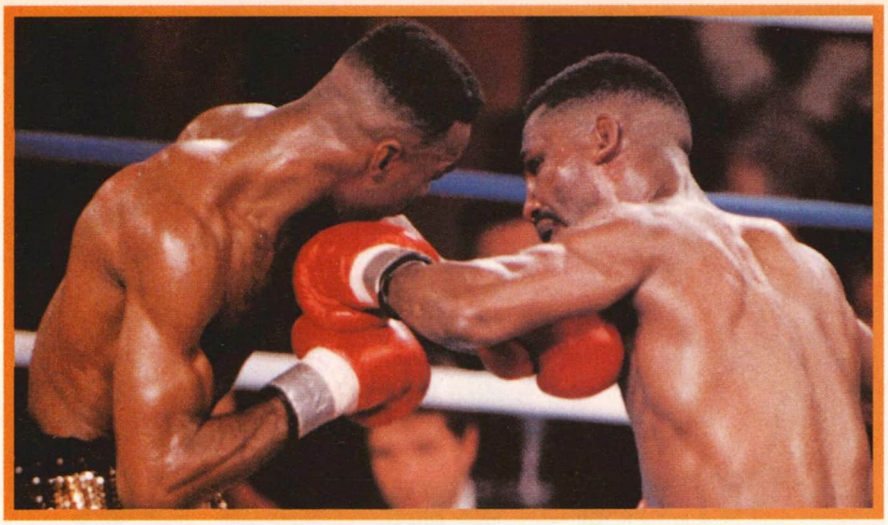
6. **Edde Cook,** Las Vegas, NV
7. **Israel Contreras,** Venezuela
8. **Javier Leon,** Mexico
9. **Rafael Del Valle,** Puerto Rico
10. **Harold Mestre,** Colombia

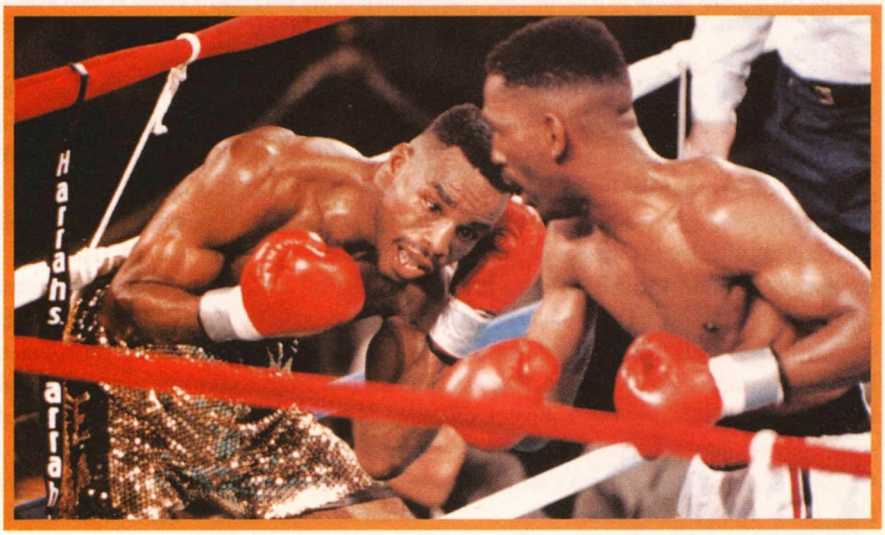
JUNIOR BANTAMWEIGHTS
1. **Sung Kil Moon,** South Korea
2. **Katsuya Onizuka,** Japan
3. **Julio Borboa,** Mexico
4. **Thalerngsak Sithbaobay,** Thailand
5. **Robert Quiroga,** San Antonio, TX
6. **Johnny Bredahl,** Denmark
7. **Marco Antonio Barrera,** Mexico
8. **Vincenzo Belcastro,** Italy
9. **Nana Konadu,** Ghana
10. **Joel Luna Zarate,** Mexico

FLYWEIGHTS
1. **Yuri Arbachakov,** Japan
2. **Phichit Sithbangprachan,** Thailand
3. **David Griman,** Venezuela
4. **Rodolfo Blanco,** Colombia
5. **Dave McAuley,** Ireland
6. **Yong Kang Kim,** South Korea
7. **Muangchai Kittikasem,** Thailand
8. **Isaias Zamudio,** Blythe, CA
9. **Scotty Olson,** Las Vegas, NV
10. **Alberto Jimenez,** Mexico

JUNIOR FLYWEIGHTS
1. **Myung Woo Yuh,** South Korea
2. **Michael Carbajal,** Phoenix, AZ
3. **Humberto Gonzalez,** Mexico
4. **Hiroki Ioka,** Japan
5. **Leon Salazar,** Panama
6. **Jose DeJesus,** Puerto Rico
7. **Melchor Cob Castro,** Mexico
8. **Domingo Sosa,** Dominican Republic
9. **Shiro Yahiro,** Japan
10. **Robinson Cuesta,** Panama

POUND FOR POUND
1. **Julio Cesar Chavez,** Junior Welterweight
2. **Pernell Whitaker,** Junior Welterweight
3. **Terry Norris,** Junior Middleweight
4. **Orlando Canizales,** Bantamweight
5. **Buddy McGirt,** Welterweight
6. **Riddick Bowe,** Heavyweight
7. **Azumah Nelson,** Junior Lightweight
8. **Sung Kil Moon,** Junior Bantamweight
9. **Julian Jackson,** Middleweight
10. **James Toney,** Middleweight





Pendleton was rattled in the opening round by southpaw Spann's left (above). Spann still controlled the fourth and fifth rounds (below), but Pendleton's guile enabled him to stay in the fight.

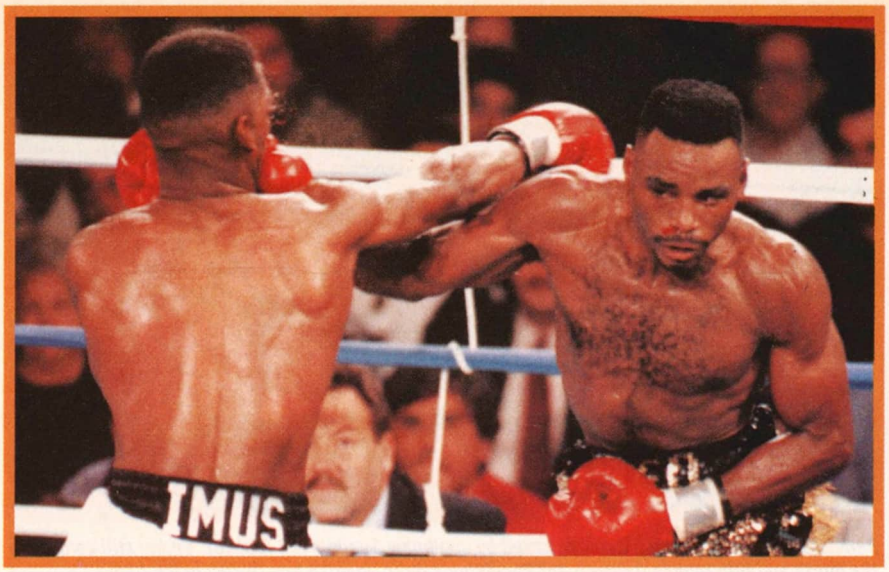
He faced Jimmy Paul on three days notice, hit the floor twice, and lost a decision. For the promise of $5,000, he walked right out in the middle of a pickup hoop game in his Philadelphia neighborhood one day, and, though out of shape, headed right to Detroit for a fight with unbeaten prospect Tyrone Trice the next night.

"I knew I had good power in my right, so if I caught him early, I could get him out of there," Pendleton explains. Trice was caught early, and three knockdowns later, he was out of there—in the first round. Pendleton's potent right hand makes his fights unpredictable (he blew out Sammy Fuentes in *15 seconds*), but so do his shaky chin and tendency to cut. All three of those traits played a part in his first meeting with Spann, in Reno last August. After a left dropped Pendleton in round one, he rebounded to rock Spann with a right to the body and another to the head in the second. But an accidental butt opened a cut above Pendleton's right eye, the fight was stopped and ruled a technical draw, and the IBF title remained vacant.

January in Atlantic City can be brutal, but not nearly as brutal as the rematch (for which Pendleton was paid a career-high $75,000) promised to be. With the two hardest hitters in the division squaring off, the forecast called for plenty of thunder, and the chinchill factor sent shudders through ringsiders. If there was any consolation, it was the fact that, unlike last time, there'd be reign before dawn.

The sequel started almost exactly as the first meeting, with southpaw Spann's left rattling Pendleton in the opening stanza. Pendleton, 135, stayed on his feet this time, and in the second, he hurt Spann, 135, with a crisp right. By round three, Pendleton was opening his mouth and bulging his eyes to mock his rival's power. Though Spann controlled rounds four and five, it was Pendleton, all guile and smile, whose solid punches were inflicting the most visible damage.

"I frustrated him," Pendleton says. "I get guys thinking of everything except what they have to do. All they say to them-



The sway of the fight turned in the sixth, as Pendleton gained the edge with a series of right hands. It was an advantage Pendleton would not relinquish the rest of the way.

selves is, 'I want to level this joker.'"

In the sixth, Pendleton, 33-17-4 (22), gained the advantage with a series of chopping rights. It was an edge that he wouldn't relinquish. Spann, 27-2-1 (21), forced the action continually, but his strategy of marching ahead and winging nuclear-tipped lefts was far too predictable. Relying on the savvy one stockpiles after encounters with the Pauls, Mayweathers, and Whitakers, Fearless Freddie frustrated Spann with a mixture of sharp counters, timely holding, and so much wrestling that the WWF title, not just the IBF belt, could have been on the line.

In the 12th, a Pendleton left wobbled Spann to the ropes, and he sat on the second strand as Pendleton pounded away. Just when it appeared that referee Randy Neumann might intervene, Spann jabbed back, and he survived until the bell. He raised his arms in triumph, but seemed to be the only person in the showroom who thought he'd won.

The three people whose opinion mattered awarded Pendleton the unanimous decision by counts of 117-111 (Jean Williams and Gary Merritt) and 116-112 (Ric Bays). THE RING scored for Pendleton, 117-111.

"Put up or shut up," says Pendleton. "I never shut up, but you saw how I can put up."

But whatever kept a guy like Pendleton from just giving up and packing up? How does a fighter with 17 losses, a guy who has been more dissatisfied with his managers than George Steinbrenner, who has logged more miles than Charles Kurault, been booed more often than Sinead O'Connor, and been stuck in drab motel rooms with parking lot views more times than he can remember, talk himself into sucking it up one … more … time? How did he keep on keepin' on for all these years?

He didn't listen to motivational cassettes or walk around humming songs about ants and rubber-tree plants. No, Pendleton relied on his two favorite supreme beings, God and himself, to get him through. God provided the latitude; Freddie provided the attitude.

No matter what would happen, Pendleton would convince himself that he was still the best lightweight on the globe. He saw the glass as half-full even when it had been emptied, smashed against a wall, and was lying shattered in a million tiny pieces on the floor. Talk to him and you discover that there are only three legitimate, excuse-free, level-playing-field defeats out of the 17 on his record: kayo losses to Montes and Frankie Randall, and the decision defeat to Paul.

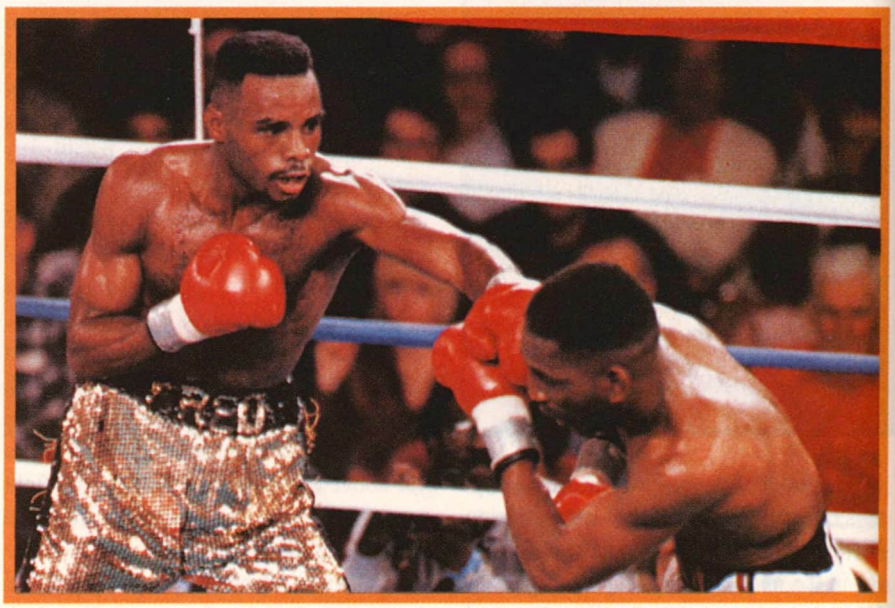
"It was in God's plan for me to be a world champion," Pendleton says. "I believed in God and myself, and my arrogance got me through. If I got beat, I'd convince myself that I didn't lose, or that the fight didn't happen. I'd mention it to my friends once, then we'd never talk about it again. I'd always talk about how good I was, that's all. Lots of times, that brought me back from feeling depressed."

"Freddie's always had this personality," says Ron Katz, a matchmaker who has worked on and off with the fighter for seven years. "Part of his psyche is that he has to constantly reassure himself of his talent. He's not nasty, like a Camacho type, but he's a very cocky kid."

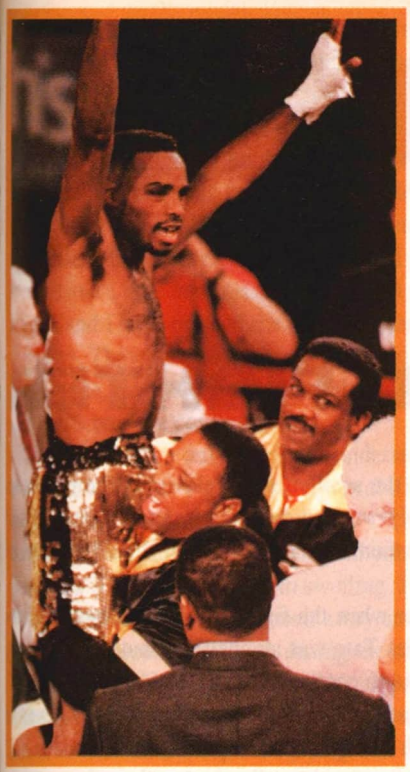
"The toughest part all those years was seeing guys I knew weren't as good as me get title shots," Pendleton adds. "Now we have the title and everybody is going to know I'm champion. I earned the right to voice myself because of everything I went through."

Exercising his right, Pendleton wasted no time assessing his future competition:

•*Tony Lopez*: "Lopez is a joke. He wasn't even a good junior lightweight; he was just skatin' by."



Pendleton put an exclamation point on a fine performance by landing a big left in the 12th round that had Spann reeling back to the ropes. Fearless Freddie won by unanimous scores.



Pendleton had plans on being hoisted up in the ring a few more times after finally grabbing a title belt. He didn't want a reign filled with easy title defenses, either.

•*Miguel Angel Gonzalez*: "He hasn't proven himself, and he's been down a couple of times. Last fight, he beat Darryl Tyson. Big deal. What is Tyson, 99 years old?"

•*Joey Gamache*: "No heart for boxing. He shouldn't have been a champion. He shouldn't have even been allowed to look at a title belt. This guy should be out looking for a real job."

•*Rafael Ruelas*: "Tough kid who can punch a little. He can fight, but I'd knock him out inside of five rounds."

•*Sharmba Mitchell*: "He's irrelevant. The guy just wants to run around. He shouldn't be in a ring, he should be tap-dancing somewhere. Can you believe he fought Rocky Lockridge? Rocky Lockridge, a guy who should have retired 20 years ago."

These days, Pendleton has put his career in the hands of the only man he trusts with it: himself. He is self-managed, and will probably defend for the first time against Giovanni Parisi on ABC on March 13. After that, he says he'll try desperately to secure unification fights with fellow titlists Lopez (WBA) or Gonzalez (WBC) because "I'm not gonna be one of those champions defending against Frito-Lay and Cap'n Crunch challengers."

Before you ask, let him explain:

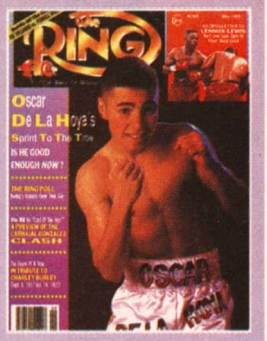
"Those are the opponents who crumble like a corn chip when they get a big fight. They get stepped on and you hear a snap, like someone's stepping on a bunch of Cap'n Crunch." That's what we thought he meant.

"Even guys like Julio Cesar Chavez fight paper fighters," Pendleton continues. "He went 11 rounds with a guy I knocked out in 15 seconds. There are two kinds of champions today: guys who look for easy fights, and guys who lose in their first or second defense. They win the title and—*bang*—they're out of there. Hagler and Duran held the belt for years. If you don't make a bunch of defenses, you never deserved to be champion in the first place."

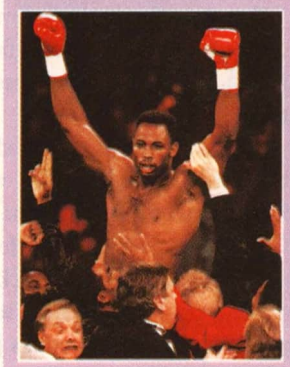
Pendleton, who has lost just twice in his last 20 fights, believes he can sign that long-term lease on the throne now. Fearless has nothing to fear unless he runs into someone who can box and punch, joke and juke, fight equally well with his fists and his brain, and look *soooooo* damn good doing it all. In other words, a mirror image.

Tell pretty Freddie Pendleton that there shouldn't be a mirror image for him to stare at anytime soon. He'll like hearing that. Though, come to think of it, maybe he won't. ■

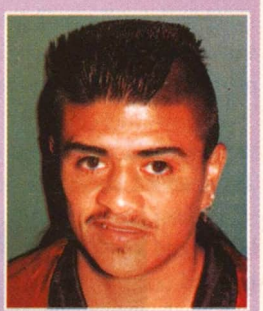
THE RING, May 1993



The Cover: Oscar De La Hoya had it all at a very young age. The first million-dollar six-round fighter bought a new four-bedroom home in a trendy section of Los Angeles, along with a van. All "The Golden Boy" was lacking was a title belt around his waist. De La Hoya's management was stuck in the dilemma of trying to protect him without impeding his progress as a fighter.

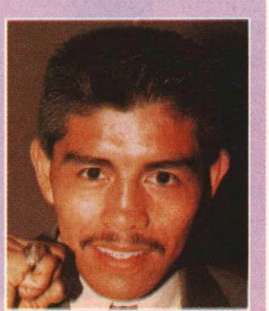


Open Letter To Lennox: Lennox Lewis' emphatic second-round knockout of Razor Ruddock enabled him to claim the WBC title, which Riddick Bowe had opted to throw in the trash rather than face mandatory challenger Lewis. THE RING suggested that Lewis force Bowe into the ring by fighting every ranked contender available.



The Lord Of The Junior Flys: Michael Carbajal wanted the boxing world to know who the best junior flyweight around was. THE RING took a look ahead at the much-anticipated clash between Carbajal and Humberto "Chiquita" Gonzalez, a showdown that resulted in each fighter receiving a division-record $350,000 apiece.

Benny Leonard's Secret: Benny Leonard, one of the all-time great lightweights, used to dare boxers of his day to hit him as he had his hands down. They always missed. The secret? Leonard, as boxing lore goes, used to train with a tomcat. Leonard was never satisfied until he was able to keep up with the little animal.



Fighter Of The Month: Julio Borboa's 12th-round kayo of Robert Quiroga for the IBF junior bantamweight belt made everyone in boxing stop asking, "Julio *who*?" It was Borboa's second consecutive win over an undefeated fighter, as he had upset previously unbeaten Al Kotey to earn the title shot two months earlier.

THE FIGHT DOCTOR

THE ONE-EYED FIGHTER

By Margaret Goodman, MD

A recurring and controversial theme in boxing is the swollen eye. Television commentators toss around its significance, cornermen furiously work to diminish it, and the referee and doctor squint to assess its severity. The big question, of course, is when should this sort of injury stop a fight.

Understandably, the injured boxer is frequently upset when the fight is halted. Remember how distressed Omar Sheika was when his bout with Thomas Tate was stopped? In that case, the ring doctor decided the injury was too severe to allow Sheika to continue. But each situation is unique. Kevin Kelley lost the WBC featherweight title to Alejandro Gonzalez due to badly swollen eyes in 1995, but knocked out Derrick Gainer the next year with his right eye completely closed.

There are many variables at work. Some fighters swell more than others, some have less-experienced cornermen, and others just can't avoid punches. But all fighters, regardless of their individual susceptibility to swelling, should be aware of the many serious conditions that can result from a punch in the eye:

•Blow-out fracture: The pear-shaped bone protecting the eye is often at risk. Symptoms include bruising around the eye, a protruding/bulging eye, double vision, or numbness around the face or cheek.

•Optic nerve damage: Trauma to the nerve that connects the eye to the brain. This usually results in immediate blindness.

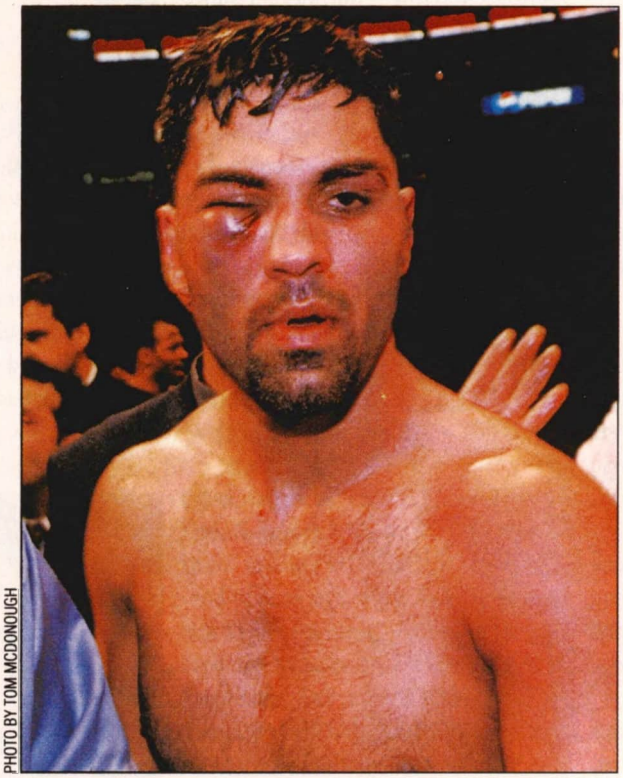


PHOTO BY TOM MCDONOUGH

Sheika's eye injury forced a stoppage of his bout with Tate

•Retinal detachment: The retina of the eye is a thin membrane made up of two layers of nerve cells that line the back of the eyeball. Trauma can separate these layers, resulting in vision loss.

Surgery is typically required for each of these conditions to prevent permanent damage, and immediate diagnosis and treatment is necessary. Unfortunately, many commissions do not require yearly eye exams with an experienced ophthalmologist. So eye problems sometimes go untreated.

During a bout, the ringside doctor plays a vital role.

"If the fighter can't see or is not defending himself, the bout must stop," said Dr. Flip Homansky, Nevada State Athletic Commissioner and former ringside physician. "A ring doctor is there to be the fighter's advocate. It is impossible to determine the extent of injury without careful examination and testing that must be performed at a hospital."

Dr. Dominic Coletta of the New Jersey Control Board agrees: "I treat these situations very much like a cut. I ask the boxer between rounds how is his/her vision. If the fighter gives me any indication he/she is at a disadvantage, the referee must end the contest."

Nonetheless, swelling of the eye tissue doesn't necessarily mean the eyeball underneath is damaged. If the eye has been sufficiently examined between rounds before it swells shut, and as long as the boxer is defending himself, the swelling can

actually protect the eyeball. The doctor must feel along the orbit bone to look for a fracture and make certain the eye can move in all directions.

Knowledge and prefight preparation can also play a role.

"Not enough fighters know their bodies," said Kelley, who now also sees a lot of fights from the other side of the ropes in his role as TV commentator. "The sport lacks education. It took me years to realize I had allergies and that after I got hit my eyes would swell. Now I take commission-authorized allergy medicine before a fight, and I have not had the same problem. Fighters should go to seminars. They need to be prepared for all situations. My trainer, Phil Borgia, prepares me for everything. I even sometimes hit the mitts with one eye covered."

Borgia isn't the only one who understands the importance of knowing a fighter's physical vulnerabilities and what to do in order to partially alleviate them. Highly respected cutman Joe Souza will ice down a fighter 10-15 minutes before the fighter warms up if the guy is prone to swelling. He will also use heavier-weight Vaseline that doesn't melt away under the hot lights.

If an eye becomes swollen during the course of a bout, the best treatment is solid pressure with a block of ice. Unfortunately, too often inexperience prevails and the amount of pressure used is equal to that suitable for stomping out a forest fire. Countless times a cornerman does more damage with an Enswell than their fighter's opponent did with his fists. This further damages the tissue, and the eye closes.

Miguel Diaz, trainer and cutman for more than 27 years, has worked with such top fighters as Floyd Mayweather and Stevie Johnston. He favors a certain tactic when one of his charges gets a swollen eye.

"I was criticized for telling Stevie to fight on the inside once his right eye closed during his fight with Saul Duran," recalled Diaz. "But inside is the safest place to be. You don't have to see the punches. You can feel your opponent's movement, and you can fight on instinct."

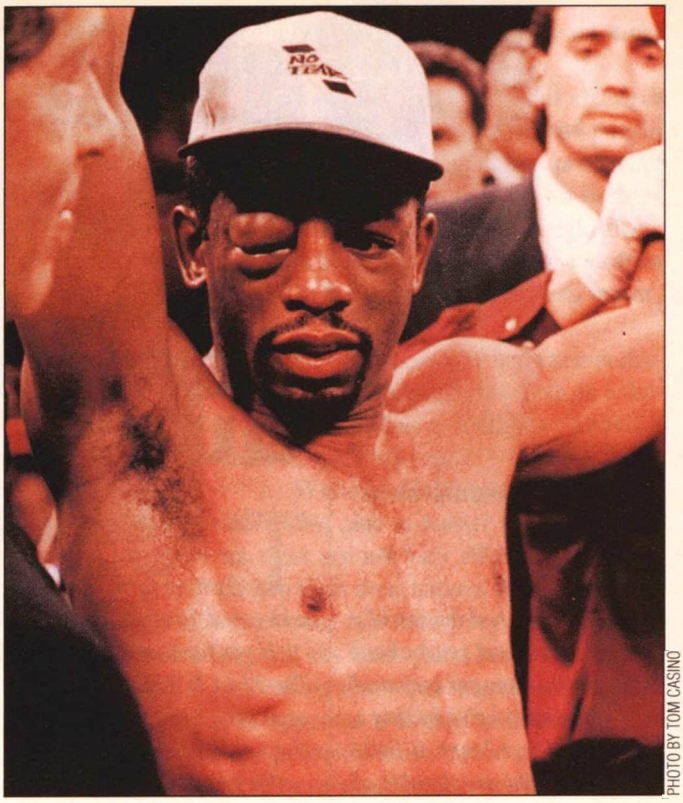


PHOTO BY TOM CASINO

Kelley overcame closed eye to kayo Gainer

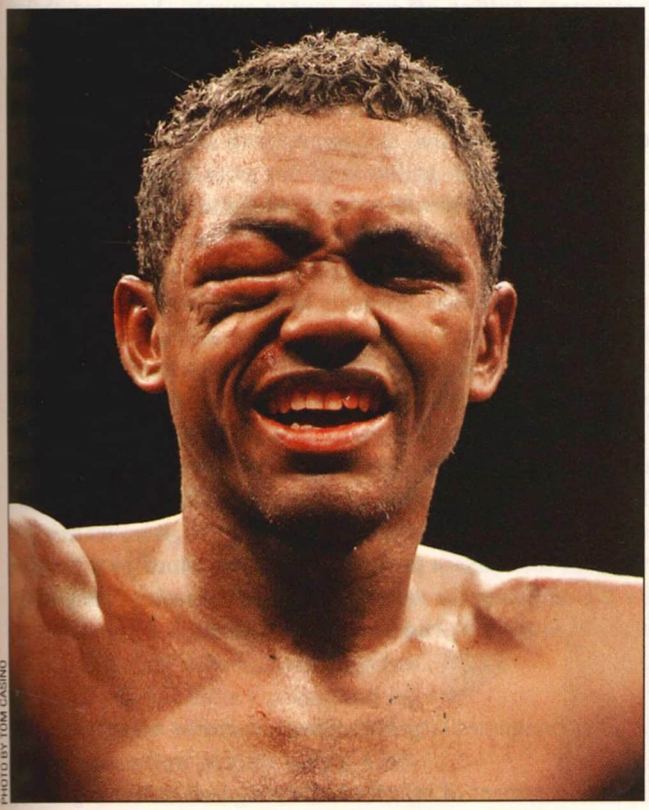


PHOTO BY TOM CASINO

Felix Machado required surgery to repair this eye injury

As you might expect, not all trainers agree with Diaz. Former WBA light heavyweight titleholder Eddie Mustafa Muhammad, now an outstanding trainer, gives his fighters the opposite advice.

"Once the eye starts to close, I tell my fighter to box," said Mustafa Muhammad. "Most tend to sit in the trenches, but you have to go to Plan B. The boxer should use their jab, catch the guy coming in, be elusive, stay away, and pile up points sticking and moving."

And when should a fight be stopped?

"In the end it is my judgment call," said Mustafa Muhammad. "If the fighter is getting hit and can't see the punches, we stop and come back another day. You have to be firm. The fighter and his family have to come first."

Beyond the obvious physical evidence of an injury, experienced fight people—trainers, cutmen, ring doctors, referees, etc.—know that there's a secret to knowing when to stop a fight, a secret not everybody understands: There is a flow to a fight. It has a beginning, middle, and end. The ring personnel are there to enable that fight to proceed to its natural conclusion. In other words, it is rare a fight stops on the injury alone. The stop depends on many intangibles. If you pay attention, I mean *really pay attention*, the boxer will show you when he has had enough. It is up to the rest of us to be alert and respond. ■

Dr. Goodman will be happy to answer questions from readers about the medical aspects of boxing in future columns. Please send your inquiries to: The Fight Doctor, P.O. Box 1148, Fort Washington, PA 19034

THE A, B, C & DEAS OF BOXING

COMMONLY ASKED QUESTIONS

By Tommy Deas

You've watched the world's best fighters and read about them in this magazine, and now you want to give boxing a try, or at least learn a little more about the mechanics of the sport. Welcome to THE RING'S bi-monthly instructional feature on boxing's basics. Bear in mind, the techniques described here are just one of many approaches to the Sweet Science. The most important thing is to find a good coach and follow his instructions.

This column is designed to address the basics of boxing, to give those who are new to the sport, or interested in taking it up for fitness or competition, a primer on proper techniques and fighting form. Along the way, you may have come up with some questions that have not been addressed. Every few months, this space will be devoted to answering some of those queries.

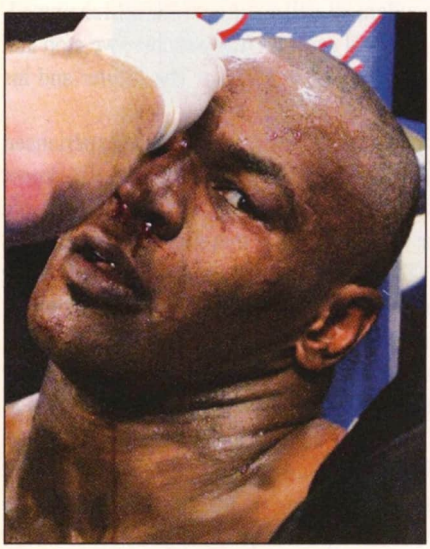
If you have any questions about boxing basics, simply drop a line to A,B,C & Deas Of Boxing c/o The Ring, P.O. Box 1148, Fort Washington, PA 19034. Keep reading, and maybe you will get some answers.

Q: I normally breathe through my nose, in and out. Is this the right way for a boxer to breathe in the ring? Also, I have heard that you must not exhale through a bloody nose during a fight. Is this true?

A: The best way for a boxer to breathe in the ring is to inhale through the nose and exhale through the mouth. Taking in air through your nose allows you to keep your mouth shut tight, as most people tend to open their mouths and "huff and puff" when taking in air through the mouth. This makes you susceptible to a broken jaw, which is more likely to happen if you are hit with your mouth open. Breathing out through your nose can cause blood or other nasal matter to collect and clog up your nose, cutting off your oxygen supply. Your mouthpiece should allow you to expel air without opening your mouth.

The best advice to handle a bloody nose is to continue to breathe in through your nose and out through the mouth. Do not attempt to blow your nose, as this will usually cause blockage and swelling, making the problem worse.

Q: What is the best kind of mouthpiece to use, one with a single tray for the upper teeth only or a double-trayed mouthpiece that also covers the bottom teeth?



Don't blow your nose, Mike

A: The safest mouthpiece is probably a double-trayed mouthpiece, since this locks the jaw in place and helps to keep the lower jaw from being displaced by a punch, but this benefit may be minimal and is not a surefire answer to taking a punch better. Many boxers, however, are more comfortable with a single-tray mouthpiece. If one type of mouthpiece proves to be too much a distraction, try another. The best advice is to shop around and see what works best for you. Whichever type you choose, make sure to make a solid impression that molds specifically to your teeth, which will protect your dental work better and be less likely to get jarred loose during a fight.

After you have decided what kind of mouthpiece is best for you, it would be a good idea to find a dentist who can then take a professional impression of your teeth and have him make or order a mouthpiece for you. This is more expensive than getting a store-bought mouthpiece, but in the long run it's probably worth it if you value your teeth.

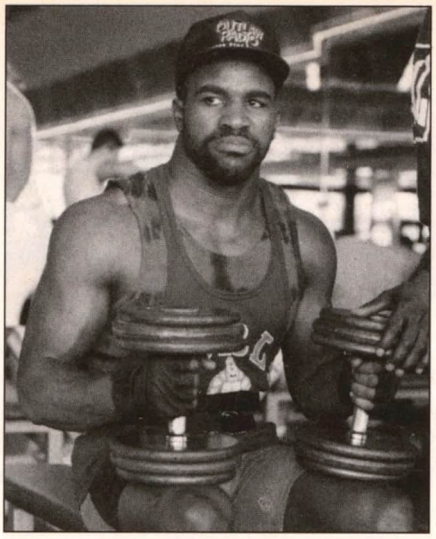
Q: What are the most common injuries I can expect to encounter as a beginning boxer, and how can I avoid them?

A: Boxers suffer a wide assortment of injuries in the ring and in training. Boxing is a physical, full-contact sport, and can be very dangerous. The body is not made to

endure the impact of punches, so injuries are part of the sport.

You can expect to suffer the obvious injuries, like a bloody nose, black eye, or busted lip when you begin sparring. Unless you have an uncanny knack for the sport or are very lucky, you will experience some or all the above once you start sparring or competing. The best way to avoid these setbacks is to make sure you practice your defense as much and as seriously as you do your offense.

Boxers also often experience hand injuries, especially bruised knuckles. This often occurs to those who fail to give themselves ample padding over the knuckles when they wrap their hands before working out. Neglecting your knuckles when you wrap your hands will only cause you to lose training time while you recover from this painful injury.



Holyfield is a firm believer in weight work

In roadwork or doing footwork in the gym, it's easy to turn an ankle and suffer a sprain. This, too, can set back your training. You have probably noticed that boxers wear high-topped shoes in the ring, and you should use them in training as well. Find a good pair of boxing shoes and use them every time you work out. For running, get some running shoes and try to stay on even surfaces. It's better to run on grass than pavement, because this lessens the shock on your joints, but you want to check out your course so you can discover holes or other spots to avoid.

Q: What about lifting weights? Is this a good idea for boxers?

A: The boxing community is split on this issue. Old-school trainers believe that lifting weights adds bulk and reduces speed. Most trainers prefer to have their boxers get down to the lowest effective weight division possible, and weightlifting can add muscles that will force you up in weight. Those who adhere to this philosophy recommend building strength through push-ups, sit-ups, and similar exercises.

More modern trainers have found that lifting weights can offer some benefits. Done properly, a boxer can increase strength through weightlifting without adding unwanted bulk or decreasing speed. Most world-class amateurs, and many top professionals, include weight training in their workout regime.

If you are going to lift weights, the best approach is to work with lighter weights while increasing repetitions. Boxers should avoid pulling exercises with weights, such as curls, and stick with pushing exercises like bench press, military press, and leg press. Even those who favor weightlifting for boxers caution against going overboard. Weightlifting should be, at most, a small part of your regular workout, and probably something best done no more than three times a week.

You should also know that strength does not necessarily translate into punching power. Power is as much a product of speed and proper technique as it is sheer force. You might find that weightlifting provides more benefit in the clinches than it does in increasing your punching power.

Q: Many top amateurs, and some professionals, are able to fight from both an orthodox stance and as a southpaw. Should I learn to fight both ways?

A: While a small handful of fighters have been able to master both approaches, most are not very effective when they switch from their natural style. Unless you are particularly gifted, learning to switch from a right-handed stance to become a lefty will not make you a better fighter. For starters, a boxer is very vulnerable when he makes the switch in mid-round, giving an opponent a chance to pounce on him before he is set. You are probably much better off learning to fight one way well than to be so-so at fighting two ways.

Q: Almost all the top fighters I see on television drop their hands, but you stress keeping your hands up all the time. Why shouldn't I try to do it their way?

A: Go ahead and try it, but do so at your own risk. Those aren't beginners you are watching on ESPN, HBO, and Showtime. They have spent years and years training and fighting and have learned to anticipate the punches that are coming their way, giving them a sense of when it might be safe to let their guard down a little. You might also notice that a lot of them get hit when they drop their hands. Even the best can pay a price for neglecting the basics.

Q: What about training supplements? Health food stores and bodybuilding gyms sell products that claim to give me more benefit for the same amount of work, and a lot of professional athletes in other sports seem to use them. Are they a good idea?

A: There are countless products on the market geared toward athletes. Some claim to increase stamina and others promise to make you stronger. Many, however, have proven dangerous to those who take them. It is best to consult your physician before trying any of these products. Remember, the guy behind the counter has an incentive to push these supplements, and he may be more interested in your money than your health. ■

Tommy Deas is a sportswriter for the Tuscaloosa (Alabama) News and trainer of professional and amateur boxers.

PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

Properly wrapped hands prevent injuries

COME OUT WRITING

PEACE EQUALS WAR!

Having been ringside at Mandalay Bay and seeing Antonio Margarito's spectacular kayo of Andrew "Six Heads" Lewis, I can only hope that Bob Arum and Don King can make peace long enough to give us a Margarito vs. Ricardo Mayorga match. It would be a "Pier Six" brawl for sure.

ROBERT MOHLER
San Francisco, CA

Letters may be edited for reasons of space and clarity. Send your comments to Come Out Writing, The Ring, P.O. Box 1148, Fort Washington, PA 19034. Or e-mail letters to comeoutwriting@yahoo.com. E-mailed letters will include the writer's e-mail address unless a city and state of origin is provided.

DEFENDING TITO

This is in response to the letter "Oscar Over Tito," in the April '03 issue of THE RING. To call Felix Trinidad a coward, as Mr. Nestor Ramirez did in his letter, is absurd. The man never took a backward step in his fight against Bernard Hopkins, and he never has. Mr. Ramirez even says that Oscar De La Hoya ran the last three rounds against Trinidad, which is something Trinidad has never done. Tito was beaten and outclassed by Hopkins, but he never gave up and he never stopped trying to win. I do agree with Mr. Ramirez on one thing: The facts speak for themselves—Trinidad is not a coward.

LUCAS DEVINE
Ft. Dodge, IA

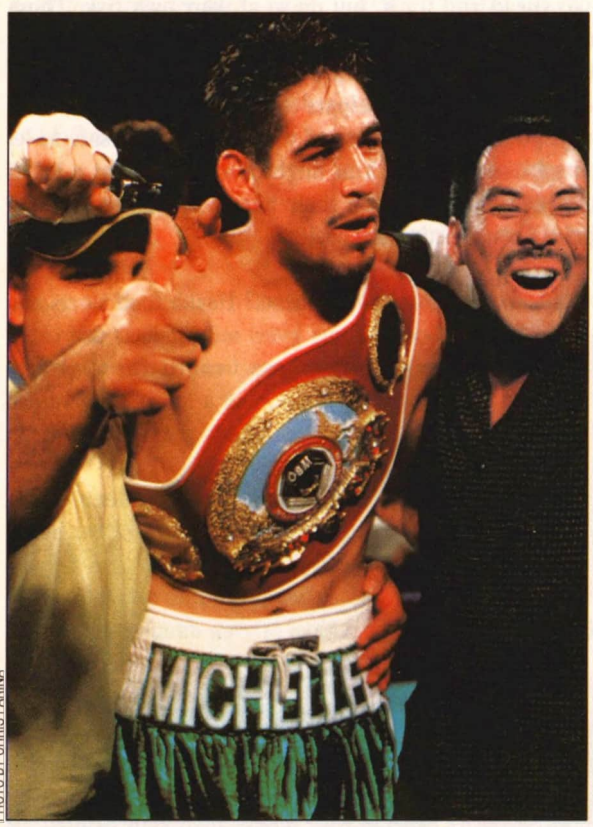


PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

Hot welterweight contender Antonio Maragarito celebrates a recent victory. Reader Robert Mohler would love to see a match between Margarito and welterweight champion Ricardo Mayorga, but understands that there might be political difficulties making the match.

KOSTYA CLEANS HOUSE

Kostya Tszyu is a great champ in a tough division. I have just read THE RING ratings in the May 2003 issue and noticed that Tszyu has beaten six of the top 10 in title fights: Sharmba Mitchell, Zab Judah, Jesse James Leija, Oktay Urkal, Ben Tackie, and Diobelys Hurtado.

IAN DYER
Victoria State, Australia

SOUR ON SUGAR

I lost a lot of respect for Sugar Shane Mosley watching his interview with Larry Merchant on HBO after the Raul Marquez fight. Shane called the purse offer of $4-million to fight a rematch Oscar De La Hoya "chump change." Mosley probably never worked a real job and doesn't realize that most people are lucky to make $40,000 a year. From now on, I will not pay to see Mosley's fights on pay-per-view because my $50 is only "chump change." I wonder how many other working-class boxing fans were alienated by his comment. After all, the fans help pay his salary. Mosley should remember that being a fighter is not just about money.

COREY YACK
Palm Desert, CA

JOHNSON THE GIANT KILLER

William Dettloff's article "What Roy Can Learn From The Voices Of Experience" in the April 2003 issue of THE RING featured analysis and advice for Roy Jones from five former light heavyweights (Michael Spinks, Bob Foster, Eddie Mustafa Muhammad, Jose Torres, Bobby Czyz) as he approached his fight with John Ruiz. Combined, these five men didn't win as half as many bouts against heavyweights as did light heavyweight great Harold Johnson. Roughly a third of Johnson's fights were

against heavyweights, yet Jersey Joe Walcott was the only big man Johnson failed to beat. Among Johnson's many heavyweight victims were Nino Valdez, Ezzard Charles, and Eddie Machen.

JOHN RAMAN
Chicago, IL

SARCASTIC IN SAN ANTONIO

I have to take my hat off to Clifford Etienne for demonstrating the not-so-lost-art of making Mike Tyson look good. This, my fellow pugilistic enthusiasts, is boxing at its finest.

REY SIFUENTES JR.
San Antonio, TX

MORE PUNCHING, LESS PORN

Regarding Showtime's coverage of the Mike Tyson-Cliff Etienne fight: When I tune in a boxing show, I expect to see boxing, not rap music. Thirty minutes of rapping, 49 seconds of boxing, and the pilot of a porn series isn't my idea of fight coverage.

TOM M. ALVIDREZ
Ft. Worth, TX

HELPING OUR OWN

Why can't there be a fight card where $500,000 is donated to the Gerald McClellan Fund? I read he was broke and that his sister is working around the clock to take care of him. The man fought wars in the ring, twice beating Julian Jackson, as well as John Mugabi. Then there was his Arturo Gatti-Micky Ward style war with Nigel Benn that ultimately led to Gerald's impaired mental and physical condition. Please, boxing promoters, let's do something good for a man who was an ultimate warrior.

RAY BACHMAN
Vallejo, CA

BARRERA NO SADDLER

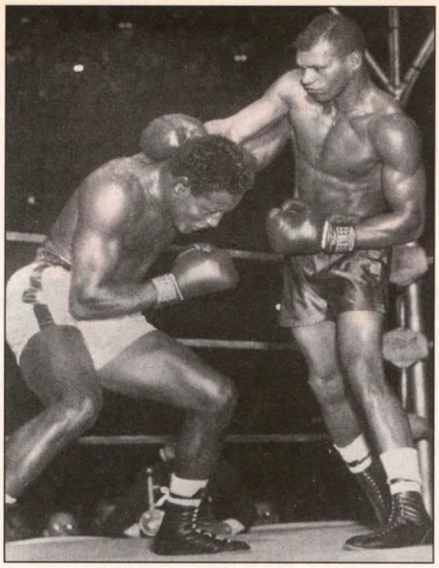
Marco Antonio Barrera in the Hall of Fame ("Barrera Has Punched His Ticket To The Hall Of Fame," March '03). Please! I don't think so. Sandy Saddler, a real Hall of Fame champion, would have knocked out Barrera with the same ease he knocked out Willie Pep in 1948.

PHILLIP THOMPSON
Detroit, MI

A MATCH FOR THE AGES

Oscar De La Hoya should fight Bernard Hopkins. It's a fight that would be very entertaining and generate a lot of money. It's also a fight that would make boxing history. If Oscar would be able to beat Hopkins, his legacy would be solidified as an all-time great in boxing history.

PAUL SOTACK
Buffalo, NY



Future light heavyweight champion Harold Johnson (right) en route to a 10-round decision over former heavyweight king Ezzard Charles in 1953. Reader John Raman reminds us that Johnson had an excellent record versus heavyweights.

FLY FLAP

How can THE RING say the flyweight title is vacant? Pongsaklek Wonjongkam's title lineage can be traced back to Miguel Canto. That title has passed from one fighter to another over the years and has never been vacated. The WBC titlist may or may not be the best flyweight in the world, but he is the true champion.

ALLEN MORRIS
Belle River, Ontario

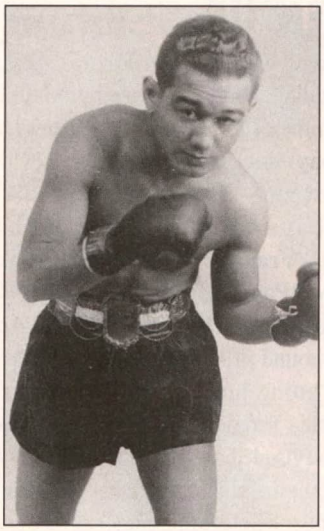
[Editor's note: THE RING, which launched its new championship policy with the April '02 issue, does not award championship belts retroactively.]

DON'T FORGET ESCOBAR & MONTANEZ

Congratulations on your masterpiece "The 80 Greatest Fighters Of The Last 80 Years" 80th anniversary issue of THE RING. I have been a subscriber for 20 years and it was one of my favorite issues. I agree totally with the way your editorial staff came to its conclusion about the 80 best fighters. Ali in third place and Joe Louis in fourth is a very wise opinion.

My only disillusion was that two of my childhood heroes while I was growing up in Puerto Rico, Sixto Escobar and Pedro Montanez, were not included. Sixto was the first world champion born in Puerto Rico, and I had the pleasure of meeting him a year before his death. He was the most humble and noble person that I could have met. Montanez fought your number-two man, Henry Armstrong, losing a very close match. I would love to read about these two excellent but ignored pugilists in future issues.

LUIS R. CUADRA
Pinellas Park, FL ■



Early Puerto Rican greats Sixto Escobar (left) and Pedro Montanez (right) did not make THE RING's list of the top 80 fighters of the last 80 years, points out reader Luis R. Cuadra. Other than those omissions, however, Mr. Cuadra enjoyed the special issue.

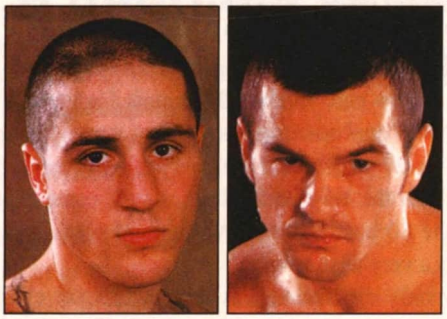
LOOKING AHEAD

By Eric Raskin

CAN SPADDY BEAT HIS SPARMATE?

We all know that styles make fights, and for **Paul Spadafora**, it's become quite apparent that the style he fares best against is the brawler/plodder type. If you had to single out the IBF lightweight titleholder's two most impressive performances, there's no question they'd be his title-winning bout against **Israel Cardona** and his defense 16 months later against **Billy Irwin**. What were the common denominators in those fights, both of which Spadafora dominated from bell to bell? For one, there's the fact that Cardona and Irwin are both face-first sluggers. But the more interesting commonality is that Spadafora prepared for both by sparring with a then-unknown Canada-based Romanian fighter named **Leonard Dorin**.

For his next fight, against another straight-ahead brawler, "The Pittsburgh Kid" could really use Dorin to get him ready. That won't be possible, however, since Dorin, now the WBA titlist at 135 pounds, will be his opponent.



Spadafora-Dorin: Classic boxer-slugger matchup

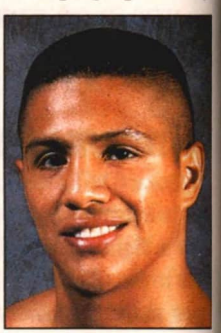
"Talent-wise and style-wise, Dorin should be made for him," said **Mike Acri**, Spadafora's promoter. "They sparred together twice before, 18 rounds total, and Paul did *very* well against him. But Dorin has improved since then."

Indeed, Dorin burst onto the world scene in 2001—the year after Spadafora-Irwin—with one-sided wins on television against then-unbeaten **Martin O'Malley** and dangerous **Emanuel Augustus**, and in '02, he took it to the next level by edging **Raul Balbi** in a thriller for the WBA belt, then handling Balbi easily in the rematch. At just 5'4", Dorin does tend to plug ahead eating punches, and there are certain elements of his style that make him look tailor-made for Spaddy. But he's much more skilled than Cardona or Irwin, and instead of relying on a big punch like they did, he's a volume puncher, meaning he won't allow Spadafora to slip so easily into his comfort zone.

This intriguing matchup will most likely take place on May 17, with HBO to televise. Spadafora will have the home-crowd advantage, as the fight is either going to be in Pittsburgh or at the nearby Mountaineer Race Track & Resort in West Virginia. The co-feature is also an appealing one, as U.S. Olympian **Jermain Taylor** will step up to by far his toughest test yet in **Alex Bunema**, a top-10 junior middleweight.

LISTEN UP

We all agree **Fernando Vargas'** first fight back following his loss to **Oscar De La Hoya** and steroid suspension should be an easy one, but Main Events is pushing it with the opponents who were being considered as of press time. The leading candidates included naturally smaller and thoroughly ordinary **Fitz Vanderpool**, faded **Tony Marshall**, and totally shot **Oba Carr**. Fortunately, the planned co-feature—**Joel Casamayor** vs. **Juan Lazcano**—should make up for the main event mismatch. The HBO doubleheader is expected to take place in Los Angeles in July … Here's how the three May NBC boxing broadcasts are shaping up: **Rocky Juarez** vs. **Frankie Archuleta** on May 3; **Juan Diaz** vs. **Eleazar Contreras** (with **Francisco "Panchito" Bojado** in the co-feature) on May 10; and **Nate Campbell** vs. **Edelmiro "Tiger" Martinez** (with **Kermit Cintron** in the co-feature) on May 17 … IBF 130-pound titlist **Carlos Hernandez**, El Salvador's first major beltholder, is planning on going home to make his first defense in San Salvador on May 30 … Philadelphia promoter **Damon Feldman** has an intriguing card planned for his first locally televised show, at the First Union Spectrum on June 20. All of the TV bouts will pit Philadelphia fighters against New England fighters (Rhode Island-based promoter **Jimmy Burchfield** is helping put the matches together), potentially creating a team-sports-like atmosphere … Top junior bantamweight **Masamori Tokuyama** will make his next WBC title defense on June 23 in Yokohama, Japan, against **Katsushige Kawashima**, who can be found at number 10 in THE RING'S rankings. ■



Vargas: In soft in comeback

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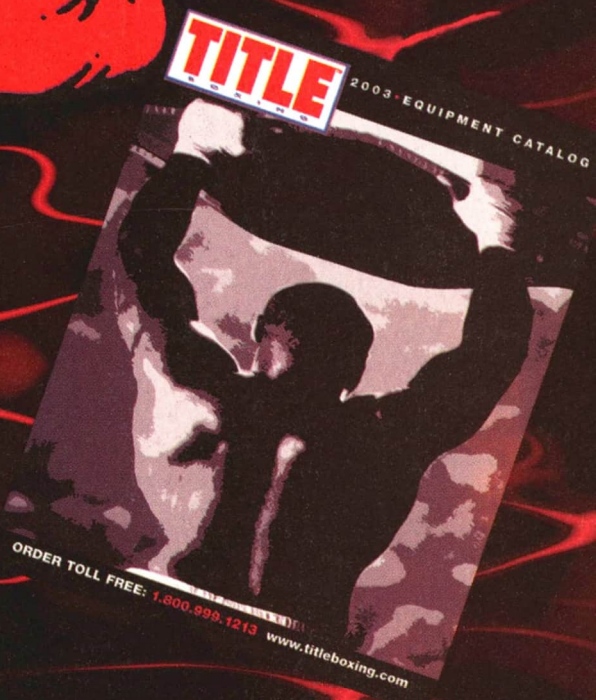

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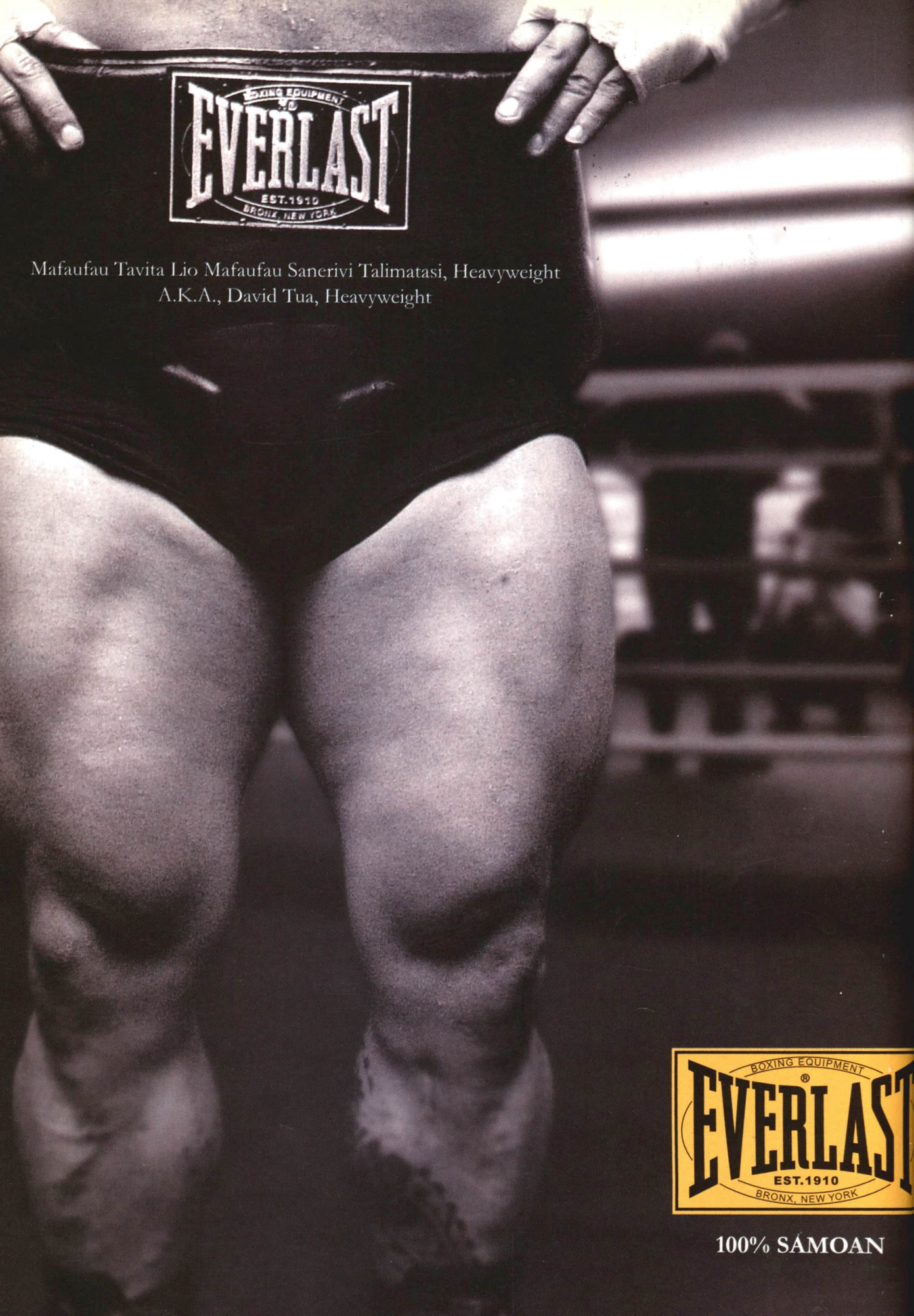

Mafaufau Tavita Lio Mafaufau Sanerivi Talimatasi, Heavyweight
A.K.A., David Tua, Heavyweight

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